Intergovernmental Consultations on Nature-based Solutions

Co-Chairs' Summary

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Introduction

This document summarizes all of the intergovernmental consultations held to date for UNEA Resolution 5/5 *Nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development.* The summary has been prepared by the Co-Chairs of the consultations, Ambassador Giovanna Valverde (Costa Rica) and Ms Sikeade Egbuwalo (Nigeria). The consultations consisted of the following meetings:

- First Global Consultation (virtual): 16-17th May 2023
- First Regional Consultations (all virtual)
    - Latin America and Caribbean: 22nd & 23rd June 2023
    - Western Europe and other States: 27th and 28th June 2023
    - Africa: 10th & 11th July 2023
    - Eastern Europe: 18th & 19th July 2023
    - Asia-Pacific: 25th & 26th July 2023
- Nairobi consultations: regional and global consultations (in person): 9-13th October 2023

Prior to the First Global Consultation and the Nairobi consultations the Co-Chairs circulated notes to all participants explaining how they intended to chair the meetings and subsequently followed up with summaries of each meeting. Together these two sets of documents were intended to inform participants on what to expect in the consultations and to make them aware of how the Co-Chairs understood the contributions that had been made as the consultations progressed.

The Co-Chairs also invited written submissions from participants. These can be found on the consultations website: https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/intergovernmental-consultations-nbs. Over the course of the consultation period, we received submissions from nine Member States, four Intergovernmental Organizations, ten Stakeholder Organizations, two UN entities and one Multilateral Environmental Agreement.

Summaries of the second round of regional consultations that took place in Nairobi were prepared by the Co-facilitators from each region. These summaries were not negotiated nor developed with full consensus and thus do not necessarily represent the consensus views of individual Member States. Nevertheless, they provide a very useful resource for understanding perspectives from the regions. These summaries can be found at: https://www.unep.org/events/working-group/final-intergovernmental-consultations-nature-based-solutions.

The starting point for all consultations was the three tasks set out in UNEA Resolution 5/5:

1. To compile examples of best practices
2. To assess and discuss potential new proposals, criteria, standards and guidelines
3. To identify options for supporting sustainable investment in nature-based solutions.

During the first global and regional consultations, additional issues came to the fore and informed Nairobi consultations. In particular, three issues were prominent:

- Measuring benefits and costs of NbS
- Policy for NbS
- Obstacles and opportunities: NbS for climate mitigation

The first two issues emerged because many participants thought that measuring the benefits and costs of NbS and developing appropriate policy for NbS were important for the scaling up of NbS. The third issue became prominent because it was a topic where there were significant divergences between participants. The Co-Chairs note that UNEA Resolution 5/5 encouraged the consultations 'to address divergences'.

The summary below is divided into sections to address each of the six issues. The summary includes points made in the panel discussions, both by panelists and by participants from the floor. Overall, the aim of this summary is to reflect the broad range of views that were presented, noting areas where there are convergence and divergence.

Two appendices are included in this summary document to assist member states. First, *the Co-Chairs' recommendations to support the implementation of nature-based solutions for Sustainable Development,* which were presented and discussed on the final day of the Nairobi consultations (Appendix 1). In addition, the Secretariat compiled a technical *Resource Guide for Nature-based Solutions* (Appendix 2).

Key Takeaways from Consultations

Overall, the following key points emerged with a significant degree of consensus amongst participants:

- A high level of support for nature-based solutions and for increasing the scale of implementation.
- Commitment to the language of the resolution, including both Operative Paragraph 1, which contains the definition of NbS and subsequent Operative Paragraphs, that elaborate on the concept.
- Widespread agreement that the overriding aim of nature-based solutions is to support sustainable development and its three pillars: environmental, social and economic.
- Concern that NbS is still not sufficiently well understood at different levels. There was a clear desire to distinguish between what is and what is not NbS. Most participants held that standards and criteria can play a key role in addressing this problem, although differences were evident on the best way forward.
- Recognition of the importance of measuring both the benefits and costs of NbS, looking beyond only financial costs and benefits, and ensuring equity in distribution of such benefits and costs.
- Agreement that NbS had a role to play in contributing to climate mitigation, but there were some differences on the nature of that role. Furthermore, it was commonly understood that NbS for climate mitigation does not replace the need for a rapid, sustained and large reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels.
- Recognition and action by many Member States to create policy for NbS, whether through adopting an explicit policy on NbS or by mainstreaming NbS across existing policies. There was also a strong recognition of the need and advantages of aligning NbS policy with existing national commitments and policies, especially related to the Rio Conventions, e.g. NBSAPs, NDCs, NAPs.

- Agreement that there is a need to increase the volume of finance for NbS, that such finance will come from a range of sources and needs to be more accessible to actors at the local level. While there was recognition of the challenges in scaling up finance for NbS there was also a constructive set of suggestions of how to do this.

Best Practices

Agreed Elements

There was general agreement among participants during the regional and global consultations on many points concerning best practice. This section lays out the major points of agreement, followed by supplementary points expanding on that theme, which might have been made by one or more participants. There was common agreement that:

- Considerations of best practices are closely linked to the question of criteria and standards, as a clear metric is needed against which to evaluate the quality of an example.
    - Several participants agreed that the definition of NbS agreed in UNEA Resolution 5/5 provides a framework for determining best practices.
    - There were calls to establish the fundamental criteria of both best practices and bad practices.
    - One participant suggested that establishing criteria for best practices would support the business case for investing in NbS.
    - One participant pointed out that much of the guidance on safeguards relating to ecosystem-based adaptation for disaster risk reduction are applicable to NbS and proposed that taking advantage of this synergy could be an efficient way to establish a best practices metric for NbS.
    - One organisation submitted a list of metrics and evidence to evaluate whether NbS interventions are of high quality and integrity.
- Best practices should not only focus on the technical and financial issues associated with implementation, but also on institutional, local governance, training and communication matters. These support increased understanding and uptake of NbS and facilitate high quality NbS interventions.
- The creation of a shared understanding of NbS are key to its success adoption at scale.
    - It was said that some Member States and organisations are still unclear on the meaning of NbS and that a clear understanding of its meaning is a prerequisite to discussions of best practices. For example, one participant was unclear on the difference between NbS and sustainable development.
- Three foundational pillars make up the core of NbS and should be the foundation for all good practices: environmental, economic and social.
- There is no one-size-fits-all approach; it is critical to ensure that NbS interventions are adapted to the specific features of the local context.

    - It was recognised that there is a tension between the fact that best practices must be specific and adapted to each individual ecological, geographical and social context, and the need the concept of best practices to be broad enough to be widely or universally applicable.
- It is important to share both best practices and bad practices examples. Reasons given for the importance of this included:
    - To showcase NbS, to show that they can be scaled up, and to inspire people that we can tackle multiple challenges together through NbS.
    - To amplify and raise awareness of the topic, and to share knowledge and experiences.
    - To avoid repeating past mistakes.
    - One participant suggested that repositories of NbS examples could provide a platform to facilitate and maintain learning communities.
    - It was suggested that an open-access database with many examples of NbS best practices could attract the academic community, and that the basis for defining best practices would organically emerge from this.
- Participants requested UNEP to compile all examples submitted during this consultation process.
    - Participants broadly agreed that this compilation of examples should not duplicate work which has already been done to compile NbS examples and should instead build on existing compilations and add value to what already exists.
    - Several Member States agreed that further to compiling all submitted examples, it would be beneficial for UNEP to curate a small set of examples showcasing excellent or exemplary practices for each type of NbS.
    - One participant suggested that UNEP could compile a list of submitted NbS examples which meet all the criteria set out in the resolution, as a first step to creating a set of best practices examples.
- Cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration are key to NbS best practices.
- Multi-stakeholder participation is key throughout all stages of the NbS project process (from design to implementation to monitoring, evaluation and project reporting). It is especially critical to ensure and facilitate the participation of Indigenous Peoples and of the communities local to where NbS projects are implemented. Women, youth and farmers also important stakeholders. Multi-level participation is also key, including national and local government and local people.
- A critical element of best practices is the recognition of and respect for the importance of indigenous knowledge, participation and rights, and local ownership of projects.
    - One participant drew attention to the elements of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework which recognize that promoting Indigenous-led action ultimately leads to more holistic, nuanced, sustainable approaches which embrace harmonized conceptions of the coexistence of humans and nature.
    - Likewise, the importance of safeguards and equitable benefit sharing are key to best practices.
- Other essential characteristics of best practices NbS interventions include robust monitoring and evaluation and ensuring that they are science-based.

    - One participant suggested that best practices examples should be accompanied by data to demonstrate their effectiveness.
- It is important to analyze the benefits and costs of NbS across different timeframes and scales to avoid or mitigate trade-offs and conflicts.
    - It was noted that best practices design of NbS should avoid conflict over land and resources with or between communities, especially regarding agriculture and Indigenous Peoples.
    - There is often a high upfront investment cost for NbS interventions. This needs to be managed carefully.
    - All impacts of NbS interventions should be considered. As an example, the potential impact that replacing chemical fertiliser with a nature-based alternative could have on food security should be considered.
    - The design of NbS interventions should consider the root causes of the challenge they are trying to tackle and, where possible, seek to address the underlying drivers so that the problem does not continue while the NbS intervention addresses only the symptoms.
    - It was noted that scalability is a feature of best practices NbS actions, as it was frequently observed that existing NbS actions need to be scaled up.
- Efforts to protect and conserve ecosystems should be prioritised as the first solution; restoration actions and other types of NbS should be implemented in cases where this has not been possible.
- NbS should contribute to multiple challenges, not just climate change or biodiversity loss. They must enhance ecosystems and biodiversity while achieving other goals.
- Collaboration across climate and biodiversity spheres, including between the UNFCCC and the CBD, is important.

Questions and Concerns

Despite general agreement on the value of sharing best practices examples, some questions and concerns were raised by participants:

- There is a persistent question around how to categorise and share examples of best practices. It was noted that there are multiple ways to do this for multiple purposes, and the intended audience and use of the compilation should always be borne in mind when deciding which one.
    - Categorising by type of challenge is often helpful.
    - Categorising by ecosystem type can also be useful.
    - Some participants suggested that examples could best be categorised along the two dimensions of challenge addressed and ecosystem type.
    - One participant suggested that it could be helpful to compile a list of the best types of NbS action to address each challenge.
    - It was also proposed that examples could be categorized along the dimensions of the six issues addressed in the final consultations, e.g. best practices for finance, best practices for policy etc, and that best practices for inclusiveness could also be added.

Best Practices Examples on the NbS Consultations webpages

The examples of NbS activities mentioned or submitted by participants in the consultations can found at this webpage: https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/intergovernmental-consultations-nbs/nbs-examples-submitted-participants. It was noted by many participants that, in the absence of agreed criteria, standards and guidelines, these examples cannot be classified as "best practices".

Standards and criteria

There was broad consensus that standards and criteria are important and can contribute significantly to building a common understanding of NbS, can assist in determining how to apply the theory to practice, and are required in order to determine what best or good practice is in NbS.

In the first round of global and regional consultations, a number of interventions emphasized that criteria, standards and guidelines are important for the following reasons:

- to clarify the concept of NbS and to help identify what counts as best practices
- having standards and criteria helps determine what does not count as NbS, and so helps avoid abuse of the term (eg; "greenwashing")
- they can promote a common understanding of NbS
- by including social and environmental safeguards, standards and criteria can ensure mainstreaming of these across NbS.

The above points were further emphasized in the final regional and global consultations where the topic of standards, criteria and guidance stimulated a great deal of discussion.

Criteria, standards and guidelines were noted as a means to:

- differentiate NbS from other similar and traditional approaches
- support capacity building: by applying the standards and criteria to specific cases, it is a way of "learning by doing"
- institutionalise NbS in national contexts
- assess the benefits and impacts of NbS.

Several regions and many individual Member States emphasized that it is important that standards and criteria are aligned with the definition of nature-based solutions found in Operative Paragraph 1 of UNEA Resolution 5/5. It was also emphasised that any standards and criteria should be consistent with sustainable development and the SDGs.

The following points were considered important in addressing the issue of standards and criteria:

- Inclusive development and application of criteria and standards, taking into account member states, stakeholders, gender, youth, indigenous peoples
- Integration of social and environmental safeguards into standards and criteria

- Consideration of national contexts, needs and priorities
- Standards and criteria should consider the Rio principles and the decisions adopted under the three Rio conventions as well as other relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements
- Standards and criteria must be science-based and supported by evidence
- Simplification of standards and criteria is required in order to facilitate the adoption of NBS by all relevant actors including local communities

There were different views regarding how to respond to the need for standards and criteria, with two main ways of doing so emerging from the consultations: to make use of existing standards and criteria, or to develop new ones.

1. **To use existing standards and criteria**
    - A number of interventions noted that it is unnecessary to reinvent the wheel.
        - It was suggested that the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions is an important resource. It was noted that while these were launched in July 2020, these will be revised in 2024. However, some Member States pointed out that the Global Standard was developed before UNEA Resolution 5/5. Thus, it is not applicable to NbS as defined in that resolution. Further, it was felt that as not all Member States are members of IUCN, thus the Global Standard cannot be adopted by all Member States.
        - It was highlighted that some guidelines that do not refer directly to nature-based solutions may still be relevant and could be applied to NbS. For example, 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.
        - FAO reported that they have created a sector-specific framework for conceptualising NbS options in agricultural landscapes and are developing practical tools to support the design and monitoring of NbS.

2. **To develop new standards and criteria**
    - Some participants felt that there is a need for Member States to agree on a new, global set of standards and criteria to serve as a tool to guide the application of NbS and to govern all NbS activities.
    - The Africa group put forward the view that a new multilateral process is required to develop standards and criteria. This process should be country driven, taking into consideration the work that is done under the Convention on Biological Diversity and other relevant fora and entities.
    - Another suggestion was that Member States should be responsible for developing their own, context specific standards and criteria.
    - The issue of flexibility and diversity was raised in some interventions: some felt that having a common standard would make the application of the concept inflexible and not sufficiently take into account local contexts. One intervention stated that a global or even regional

standard goes against the very diversity of NbS and caution must be taken in trying to globalize methodologies or guidelines.
- In the first Global Consultations, the International Standards Organization communicated their interest in developing a standard for nature-based solutions.

The following proposal is not a distinct option from the first two and could be used in conjunction with either of them.

To conduct a systematic assessment of criteria, standards and guidelines:

- Interventions proposed that there should be an analysis of existing criteria, standards and guidance produced by multilateral forums, such as the Rio Conventions, and by other international sources such as IUCN. These are relevant to the implementation of NbS and have a considerable track record of successful application. A key purpose of this analysis would be to identify convergence of existing criteria and common factors relevant to the successful implementation of NbS.
- It was proposed that the process could involve analyzing existing criteria and standards with an emphasis on identifying commonalities and convergence with other environmental conventions. This could set the stage for a harmonized and effective approach.
- Interventions were made saying that building upon these established criteria allows for consistency in the implementation of NBS projects. It was highlighted that a deeper exploration of these standards, their integration, and their adaptation to each region's unique circumstances is, however, needed.
- A recommendation was made that UNEP should compile existing guidelines, assess where they overlapped and converged, and initiate a process in which Member States could reflect on them.

A further suggestion was made, that was not a direct alternative to any of the options mentioned above, but that could be done in conjunction with any of those options:

Make use of the text of the resolution, which captures a number of factors essential for the successful implementation of NbS, to formulate simple standards and criteria:

The following points were made in interventions:

- UNEA Resolution 5/5 provides a strong framework for determining whether an action counts as NbS or not.
- UNEA Resolution 5/5 both in the definition and in the subsequent paragraphs provides the foundational, multilaterally agreed understanding of what factors are essential for the successful implementation of NbS.

Measuring Benefits and Costs

All regions concurred that it is important to measure the benefits and costs of NbS and that this should include both economic and non-economic benefits and costs.

Interventions in the consultations emphasized that, measuring the benefits and costs of nature-based solutions is important for:

- 'making the case' for nature-based solutions,
- guiding decision-makers, and
- accessing finance.

Key considerations that were raised by participants in the regional meetings as well as in the global consultations included:

NbS have multiple benefits and costs across different sectors

- Benefits from NbS encompass economic gains, environmental benefits and social advantages.
- The financial costs associated with NBS can be seen as investments in NbS interventions rather than as expenses, with long term non-financial benefits such as, for example, reduced soil erosion and climate resilience.
- Some NBS projects demand substantial initial financial investments. However, the long-term maintenance costs and other associated expenses may favour NBS when compared to other approaches. One participant noted that examples of NbS that address coastal erosion and flood control illustrate their cost-effectiveness. Moreover, the adoption of NBS at an individual and community level was seen as crucial for comprehensive climate adaptation.

Evaluations of benefits and costs must be undertaken and metrics to do so are needed

- Any evaluation needs to include environmental, social and economic benefits and costs.
- Such evaluations should be carried out at the different stages of NBS implementation.
- Evaluations should be multidisciplinary, and science-based.
- There is a need for guidelines and indicators to assess the benefits and costs, as well as a question of who would develop such guidelines and indicators.
- Efforts to showcase the value of NBS projects were deemed essential.
- Technical assistance for measuring benefits and costs was identified as a supportive measure to promote NBS implementation effectively.
- Some participants asserted that NbS practitioners do not need to start from scratch. They can build on measurement frameworks used by other processes and institutions.
- Monitoring biodiversity is an issue where progress is needed. It was noted that it may be difficult to quantify the value of nature, which has an intrinsic value.
- It was also stated that methods of assessing NbS in the short and long term must be improved and the value of ecosystem services needs to be assessed in a more holistic way if we are to have a

realistic reflection of cost and benefits. For example, how do you quantify mental health benefits that may arise from urban green infrastructure? UNEP may be well positioned to lead work on developing a framework to measure the costs and benefits of NbS in a holistic way.

- The viability of NBS must be evaluated thoroughly, particularly in terms of benefits and costs. A comprehensive strategy was proposed, encompassing economic and non-economic elements and community involvement.
- Multiple country interventions noted the difficulty in measuring the overall benefits and costs of NbS as there are no standardized metrics to quantify the outcomes.
- Participants also highlighted that it is important to explore how to improve transparency and make the contributions of NbS to climate and other action clearer. On climate action, it may be helpful to engage with the UNFCCC when developing tracking and promoting transparency. This could make it easier to value the benefits of NBS and help to make the case for NBS.

Distribution of benefits and costs must be understood

- Stakeholders who are benefiting from NBS or bearing the costs are not always the ones implementing and managing the interventions.
- We need to work on understanding how NBS benefits and costs are distributed, how it can be made more fair, and how to develop relevant policies.
- Trade-offs must be identified and considered from the design phase onwards.
- It was also noted by some participants that it is important to have a differentiated approach. The impact on women and on Indigenous Peoples must be considered as factors when designing and financing NbS interventions and assessing their benefits and costs.

Finance for Nature-based Solutions

The consultations on finance covered five main issues: the need for additional finance for NbS; the different sources of finance; access to finance; the challenges associated with finance for NbS; and policies, measures and other actions that can assist with financing.

Need for finance

The need for additional finance for NbS was recognized by almost all participants. The following specific points were also made:

- Finance for NbS needs to be sustainable.
- There is a need for a robust financing mechanism, especially for developing countries.
- Finance should be agile and avoid cumbersome administrative procedures.
- Future funding for NbS should be new, predictable and additional, while ensuring that the process will not alter existing obligations of parties under Multilateral Environmental Agreements.
- Nature-based solutions can be more expensive than other options because they often tackle more than one social, economic or environmental challenge.

- Countries are in different stages with regard to securing finance. Some have made more progress in developing financing options than others.

Sources of finance

The consideration of the sources of finance emphasized the wide range of potential sources. The following points were made:

- Finance is needed from a diversity of different sources. These include public and private sources (the latter including commercial banks), national and international sources as well as impact investors, venture capitalists and philanthropists.
- The importance of innovative sources of finance was mentioned by a significant number of participants. Innovative finance was understood to include: green bonds, debt swaps, carbon credits and biodiversity credits.
- It was noted that debt-swap mechanisms can begin to compensate for the environmental deterioration that has been mainly brought about by developed countries. It is an historic responsibility that must be honored.
- A number of participants emphasized the importance of increasing the volume of private investment in NbS. It was also noted that because NbS often promotes public goods, from which it can be difficult to generate a private return on investment, increasing the amount of private investment in NbS can be difficult and will require the development of supportive policy and regulatory frameworks.

Access to finance

A number of participants raised the issue of access to finance, emphasizing that there are important groups and constituencies who do or could implement NbS, but find it difficult to access finance to support their efforts.

- It was noted that the following groups and constituencies find it difficult to gain access to finance for NbS:
    - Local actors, including local enterprises
    - Indigenous Peoples
    - Women
    - Youth
- It was proposed that action is needed to facilitate access to finance for the above groups, from existing and new sources.

Challenges

A number of challenges in the provision of finance for NbS were identified. These included:

- Difficulties in accessing multilateral funds, including the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environmental Facility because of the administrative complexity of the application processes.
- The lack of understanding of NbS amongst financial institutions.
- The existence of significant subsidies for environmentally harmful practices, that mean there is not a level playing field for nature-based solutions.

Policies, measures and other actions that could facilitate finance for NbS

A range of different types of action were proposed for facilitating finance for NbS, including: lobbying and promotion; the communication of appropriate information, analyses and models; and structural changes in policy. The specific proposals included:

Lobbying and promotion

- Build on organizational and political commitments, including: the commitment of Multilateral Development Banks on NbS made at UNFCCC COP-26; and the Leaders Pledge for Nature which includes a commitment to incentivize the financial system to promote biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration and sustainable use, as well as an explicit commitment to scale up support for biodiversity from all sources, including through NbS.
- Encourage private and philanthropic contributions to the Global Biodiversity Fund, including Targets 8 & 11 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
- Promote innovative financial mechanisms, noting that the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Target 19(d) identifies potential pathways, such as biodiversity credits.

Information provision

- Develop a list of available funding options, including but not limited to multilateral and bilateral sources of finance for NbS.
- Facilitate the communication of information from Indigenous Peoples and local communities about the many NbS activities they are undertaking. Currently, this is not always well understood by national governments and other external organizations. Facilitating this information flow will need resources and partnerships with national governments. It will help make the case for increasing the availability of finance to Indigenous Peoples and other local actors.
- Provide capacity building on finance issues for NbS stakeholders.

Analysis

- Develop a small list of examples of where private sector finance models for NbS have been successful, including an analysis of the conditions of success.
- Analyze how much funding from multilateral, bilateral and other sources counts as NbS (even if it is not labelled as such) and assess to what extent the siloed character of multilateral funds is hampering funding of NbS because some of the co-benefits are not considered (since they are not the objectives of that specific fund).
- Make a strong business case for NbS. This requires emphasizing what the opportunities are and demonstrating the relative cost-efficiency *vis á vis* grey infrastructure and the multiple benefits of individual NbS interventions. It is important that the conversation on NbS can reach beyond the environmental niche.
- Making the business case for NbS will involve assessing the benefits and costs of NbS.

Allocation of finance

- There is a need to re-allocate existing public funds from grey infrastructure to NbS.
- In operationalizing Targets 15 & 18 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework consideration needs to be given as to how to better stimulate private sector demand for NbS and eliminate, phase out or reform incentives including subsidies that are harmful for biodiversity.
- A small number of participants proposed the establishment of a dedicated NbS fund.

Policy measures

- NbS can provide cross-sectoral solutions and they may need structural change at the policy level because funding is often provided on a sector-specific basis. There is a need to break this silo framework. The recognition of the cross-sectoral nature of many NbS could increase the amount of finance available.
- Subsidies for environmentally harmful actions prevent the emergence of a level playing field for NbS.
- Several participants emphasized that there is a need to take account of all the Rio principles – including the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities.
- Finally, it was noted by several participants that in addition to increased finance, there is also a need for support for other means of implementation, including capacity building and technical support.

Nature based solutions for climate mitigation

The consultations on NbS for climate mitigation covered a number of different issues and the points made have been clustered under seven different headings below.

NbS for mitigation and other types of NbS

Several points were made about the place of NbS for climate mitigation in relation to other types of NbS and to the broader Sustainable Development agenda.

- Some participants questioned the focus on NbS for climate mitigation, arguing that NbS can make important contributions to other types of climate action, including adaptation and building resilience. It was noted that for many developing countries NbS for adaptation is more important than NbS for mitigation.
- It was also emphasized that NbS are not focused only on climate action but can also contribute to a wide range of other social, economic and environmental challenges.
- There was wide agreement about the importance of ensuring that NbS are placed in the broader context of their contribution to sustainable development, as indicated in the title of UNEA Resolution 5/5.
- A few participants questioned whether the Co-Chairs had the mandate to include NbS for climate mitigation as one of the six main issues for discussion at the Nairobi meeting. The Co-Chairs

responded that it was within the scope of their responsibilities to note the issues raised by participants and to structure the consultations accordingly.

The contribution of NbS to climate mitigation

- There was widespread agreement that NbS can contribute to climate mitigation and some participants emphasized that NbS can make a significant contribution to mitigation goals.
- It was noted that some forms of NbS that have a primary goal of addressing another challenge can also contribute to climate mitigation as a co-benefit, particularly where they involve the restoration of ecosystems or the conservation of ecosystems that are being degraded.
- Some participants emphasized the importance of transparency about the size of the contribution that NbS can make to mitigation. Scepticism was expressed about whether the contribution was as large as some have claimed.
- There was widespread agreement that NbS for climate mitigation does not replace the need for a rapid, sustained and large reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels.
- Some participants noted that NbS for mitigation provides an important link between the climate and biodiversity agendas and several also encouraged further exchange on the nexus between biodiversity and climate action and the role of NbS in this. It was said that such exchanges can help cross-fertilise discussions and overcome existing silos.

Indigenous peoples and NbS for climate mitigation

- Many participants emphasized how important it is that NbS for mitigation respects the rights and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities.
- It was reiterated that the implementation of NbS must involve the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

The role of NbS offsets

- Some participants urged that if NbS is used for offsetting emissions from elsewhere there must be strong adherence to social and environmental safeguards.
- Others were more sceptical about the use of offsets at all, suggesting that the market will not help to address climate change.
- One participant noted that it was important to distinguish between NbS projects that are offset-based and those that are not. The latter can provide direct benefits for the planet in a way that the former do not.

Lack of legal and regulatory frameworks for NbS for mitigation

- Some participants were critical of the lack of legal and regulatory frameworks for NbS for mitigation.
- It was said that many stakeholders do not have a good understanding of NbS for mitigation and capacity building is needed.
- It was also pointed out that the understanding of safeguards and their role in NbS for mitigation is not as well advanced as it needs to be.

- It was suggested that it would be worthwhile to identify the obstacles to NbS for mitigation with its co-benefits, and to seek ways to overcome them.

NbS for mitigation and multilateral environmental agreements

A number of different points were made about the relation between NbS for mitigation and multilateral environmental agreements. The points made included:

- There is scope for Targets 8 and 11 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to reflect the value of NbS for climate mitigation and the need to foster positive impacts of climate action on biodiversity. It was also held that NbS are very relevant to Article 5 of the Paris Agreement.
- Any discussion of the role in NbS in contributing to climate action needs to be undertaken within the framework of the UNFCCC.
- NbS is an important tool to reach both global biodiversity and climate goals.
- It would be worthwhile to examine how NbS is being incorporated into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (under the CBD) and Nationally Determined Contributions (under the UNFCCC).

Policy for Nature-based Solutions

Policy Requirements

This section summarises the points that were made regarding: the importance of policy for NbS; challenges and considerations for creating NbS policy; what such policies should include or address; and ideas on how to do so. It is followed by a section summarising the NbS policies which were mentioned or presented in the consultations.

- Participants agreed that it is important to include NbS in policy at the global, regional, national and local levels, and that NbS needs to be made a political priority.
    - The need was raised for NbS policy to be made and delivered at different levels, ensuring alignment between them. This is to ensure appropriate application and approval processes, without slowing down policy action.
    - There was support, especially in the Africa regional consultation, for the development of regional policy and strategy (e.g. through the African Union and the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment) which could then inform country policy-making by building awareness, capacity and cooperation.
- It was also noted that strategies need to be in place to ensure that environment ministers can convince the government of the merits of and need for NbS, especially as an alternative to grey infrastructure.
- It was widely noted that NbS policies should be flexible and adaptable to changing needs. However, policies often take a long time to be developed, adopted and amended, and therefore this presents a challenge.

- It was also noted that many measures implemented at the national level respond to emergencies, and take a short-term approach. As such, the importance of medium- and long-term strategies which can survive changes in government was highlighted.
- There was discussion of the relative advantages and disadvantages of creating specific policies for NbS as compared to integrating NbS into existing sectoral policies. It was also noted that these do not need to be mutually exclusive.
    - Some Member States reported having specific NbS policy; others reported having integrated NbS into existing policies. Some are in the process of identifying national and sub-national policies into which they could integrate NbS and some are in the process of drafting NbS legislation.
    - It was pointed out that creating entirely new policies is a lengthy process, so incorporating NbS into existing policies is generally a faster process.
    - One participant suggested that a proposal be made at UNEA 6 to convene regional and sub-regional organisations to support the development of dedicated NbS policies.
    - Another participant suggested that the consultations should give guidance on mainstreaming NbS into national policies to participants, as well as into CBD processes and the UNFCCC Global Stocktake.
    - Another participant suggested that UNEP explore the creation of a technical mechanism to support countries to mainstream and implement NbS, considering national contexts.
- Many participants noted the importance of aligning NbS policy with existing national commitments, such as to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and other instruments, such as Nationally Determined Contributions, National Adaptation Plans and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.
    - Two participants requested that UNEP collaborate with other relevant organisations, e.g. IPBES, IPCC and IRP, to analyze updated NDCs, NBSAPs and NAPs to produce a synthesis report to see how NbS (and harmonised approaches) are used and draw lessons learned from these policy instruments.
    - It was also highlighted that it is critical to ensure that policymakers fully understand NbS.
- Many participants highlighted the need for NbS policy to be centred on the social/human dimension and include social safeguards, especially for vulnerable and marginalised groups including Indigenous Peoples, women, youth and children, including enshrining Free, Prior and Informed Consent. Non-governmental organizations should also be included in the process of NbS policymaking.
    - One participant highlighted that NbS policy should intentionally aim to redress social inequities in vulnerability and access to nature's benefits.
    - Many participants noted that NbS policy should ensure fair and equitable benefit sharing.
    - It was noted that NbS policy should align with and support sustainable development, especially in developing countries.
- It was emphasised by many participants that NbS policy should be based on robust monitoring and evaluation, informed by both scientific and Indigenous knowledge, and should evolve in line with new research on NbS.

- It was highlighted that legal aspects which might affect NbS implementation, such as land ownership and property rights, are critical to bear in mind during NbS policy design to ensure alignment with policy objectives.
- The following characteristics of polices were said to be important for achieving transformational impact:
    - Policy should be people-centric, include and respect local needs, and encourage local community buy-in.
    - Policies should be updated frequently, in line with developments in science, research and best practices.
    - NbS policy should take a long-term view and balance short- and long-term benefits and costs.
    - Funding and institutional capacity and processes should be conducive to ensuring that policies are implemented and monitored.
    - The benefits of NbS should be reflected in national accounting practices.
    - Training and capacity building of the NbS workforce are needed to support effective implementation of NbS policies and to contribute to a just transition.
    - Cross-sectoral collaboration is needed, especially between labour, academia and technical specialists, and different levels of government.
    - International and/or regional cooperation is also necessary where an ecosystem, species or issue transcends national boundaries.
    - Supporting legislation, such as for protected areas is needed for the implementation of certain NbS policies. Perverse incentives must be removed.
    - Mainstream the challenges faced, e.g. climate change, biodiversity loss and sustainability, into development plans across sectors. NbS policy can be an opportunity to bring coherence between environmental and development agendas.
    - Communication and awareness-raising is needed to inform and educate the public on what NbS is and on its benefits.
- One participant noted that community action often precedes and paves the way for policy, and that policy sometimes responds to, rather than leads action.
- One participant noted that all ecosystem types should be included in NbS policies and suggested that this should be done along the lines of the main ecosystem types identified in the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration, building on Ramsar Resolution 14/7.

Examples of Policies

This section collates the policies, strategies and plans that were referenced by participants – largely by Member States – during the final round of consultations. It is divided into two sub-sections: the first lists policies which have been specifically created on the subject of NbS to support its uptake and implementation. The second sub-section lists policies which were mentioned as including, incorporating and/or supporting NbS, but have a wider remit than NbS alone.

Specific NbS Policies

Mexico:

- National Strategy for Blue Carbon
    - Integrates environmental, social, economic, cultural and ecosystem protection dimensions.
- Protected Areas
    - Sustainably managed by the local communities.
- 'Sembrando Vida' ('Growing Life') Programme
    - A reforestation programme intending to plant 1.15 billion fruit and wood trees across more than a million hectares, involving 446 farmers. It aims to contribute to the social wellbeing of growers by supporting food sovereignty through productive agroforestry systems.

USA:

- Biden Executive Order Earth Day 2022 (EO 14072)
    - Recognised the importance of forests and other nature-based solutions to tackle the climate crisis and strengthen communities and local economies.
- NbS Roadmap & report
    - New inter-agency funding commitments of over $25 billion on NbS are aligned with Roadmap.
    - Outlines 5 strategic areas of focus now being tackled: the need to update policies; unlocking funding; leading with federal facilities & agencies; training the NbS workforce; and prioritisation of knowledge, adaptive learning and research to advance NbS.

China:

- Master Plan for key ecosystem protection and restoration projects to 2035.
- Guidelines for mountain, river, forest, lake and grassland restoration to enhance resilience.
- Specialised legislation on grasslands, watershed protection, forests, flood control, water resources, marine environment, and wildlife protection supported by comprehensive administrative policy from top-level design to implementation, including strategic planning, action plans, complementary management regulations, and fiscal and taxation policies.
- Policies for information transparency and informatisation to conduct large-scale assessments to establish monitoring platforms and systems to enhance progress-tracking capacities.
- Policies for advocacy and stakeholder engagement.
- Grain for Green Program, also known as Conversion of Cropland to Forest Program
    - This Payment for Ecosystems (PES) program pays farmers to plant trees on their land and provides degraded land to rural families to restore.

Dominican Republic

- Draft law on the use of NbS for the recovery and preservation of hydrological basins/watersheds.

Costa Rica

- Payment for Ecosystem Services

- Supporting communities to protect ecosystems and biodiversity and contributing to livelihoods.

Chile

- Legal statute for NbS.
- Ministry of Environment working on guidelines for NbS.
- Promoting inter-sectoral policy that can be implemented at all levels.

Germany

- Federal Action Plan on Nature-based Solutions for Climate and Biodiversity
  - Contains 69 measures, ranging from marine conservation and healthy, near-natural forests to floodplain restoration and wilderness area management. The Federal Environment Ministry will provide 4 billion euros up to 2026 to finance these measures from the new Climate and Transformation Fund.
- National Centre for Nature-based Solutions
  - Created under the Action Plan

Canada

- Nature-smart Climate Solutions Fund
  - A $4.7 billion fund created by the Government of Canada to address climate change and biodiversity loss by investing in:
    - The 2 Billion Trees Program
    - Nature-Smart Climate Solutions
    - Agricultural Climate Solutions

NbS Integrated into Existing Policies

China:

- Climate Adaptation Strategy
- Updated NBSAP
- Policies on Major Projects (102 Major Projects covering 2006 individual projects), many of which are aligned with NbS, addressing ecosystem restoration, biodiversity conservation and environment-related issues.
  - Investigates ecological functions, socio-economic conditions, and problem drivers, and proposes hierarchical target system that prioritises different levels of implementation and combines both mandatory and guidance-oriented measures. Also specifies spatial distribution and timing of project implementation and selects optimal measures according to local conditions.
- Chinese Ministry of Biology and Environment is collaborating with IUCN to set up an NbS capacity building centre.

Nepal:

- National Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development 2015 – 2030

Nigeria:

- National Climate Change Act – this led to the establishment of the National Council on Climate Change, and is the first standalone comprehensive climate change policy in West Africa. This aims to:
    - Foster low-carbon, high-growth development plans and build a resilient society.
    - Strengthen national capacity to adapt to climate change and improve climate-related science and technology, allowing the country to better participate in international cooperation on climate change.
    - Increase public awareness and engage the private sector in facing the challenges of climate change.
    - Strengthen national institutions and mechanisms to establish suitable and functional frameworks for climate change governance.
- Updated NDC
- National Forest Policy
- Great Green Wall Act
- NBSAP

Dominican Republic

- The Dominican Republic has identified these as national policies into which NbS could be integrated:
    - NDC
    - NAP
    - Ley de Ordenamiento Territorial (Land Code Law)

European Union

- The EU Green Deal is a regional policy framework which aims to set the EU on a path to a green transition. The cornerstones are doing no harm and leaving no one behind.
    - Within this framework, many laws and policies have been passed, with NbS being a cross-cutting theme.

Canada

- National Adaptation Strategy
    - Aims to accelerate the use of nature-based solutions to increase resilience and maximize co-benefits.

Costa Rica

- National Strategy for Circular Economy
- National Biodiversity Strategy 2016-2025

- National Decarbonisation Plan 2018-2050
- National Blue Carbon Strategy

São Tomé and Príncipe

- Adaptation and Resilience Policy for Health

Chile

- Framework Law on Climate Change
- Long-term Strategy for Climate Change
- National Urban Parks Policy
- National Landscape Restoration Plan (2021-2030)
- Laws: 20600, 20507
- National Policy for Land Code

Africa (regional)

- African Biodiversity Strategy (May 2023)
    - This regional strategy has sub-regional sub-strategies, e.g. for West Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, Central Africa and North Africa, could provide a framework to encourage and guide NbS commitments and actions across the continent.

Cameroon

- National Development Strategy 2030
    - Environmental protection is enshrined as a pillar of Cameroon's development policies.
    - For example, the national forest protection policy includes the 3 dimensions of sustainable development: environmental, economic and social, with parts of the forest reserved for local communities.

Bangladesh

- Biodiversity Paper

Sri Lanka

- NbS is included in Sri Lanka's climate change policies

United Arab Emirates

- National Adaptation Plan 2050

Pakistan

- National Adaptation Plan
- National Climate Change Policy 2021

Cuba

- Decree 86 on facing climate change.

Argentina

- NbS is incorporated into Argentina's forest policy, biodiversity protection policy and climate change policy.

Bolivia

- Law 300 – Mother Earth Law
    - Bolivia believes that the concept of Madre Tierra (Mother Earth) enshrined in this law is more advanced than the concept of NbS. Therefore, while there are aspects common to both NbS and Mother Earth in this law, NbS is not explicitly included in this law.

Brazil

- Brasil sem Fome (Brazil without Hunger)
    - A programme aiming to end hunger in Brazil through 3 pillars of action: access to income, adequate and healthy nutrition, and mobility.
- Ecological Transition Plan of the Ministry of Finance
    - Will help Brazil to meet its emissions reduction commitments, based on sustainable finance, circular economy, technological intensification, bioeconomy, energy transition and climate mitigation and adaptation.
- Reactivating National Commission for the Sustainable Development Goals

New Zealand

- NbS is included in New Zealand's domestic adaptation policy.

Bulgaria

- National Framework for Priority Actions for Natura 2000
- National Development Programme of Bulgaria 2030
    - These envisage reforms and measures aimed at improving the management of the network and Natura 2000 sites through legislative changes. The aim is to protect and restore at least 30% of the natural habitats and species subject to conservation in the Natura 2000 network.
- Programme Environment 2021-2027
    - Financing green infrastructure projects, including protection and improvement of existing green areas in cities and suburban environments and flood risk reduction.
- National Recovery and Resilience Plan of Bulgaria
    - A 913 million EUR Green Transition plan of investment in environmental activities including integrating the ecosystem approach and implementing NbS, ecosystem restoration, and water and sanitation actions.
- 3 Billion Additional Trees Pledge

- A national afforestation plan which aims to plant 100 million trees between 2022 and 2030, in full respect of ecological principles, to increase the resilience of forests and their role in reversing biodiversity loss and supporting climate mitigation and adaptation.