Statement by the University of Cambridge Conservation Leadership Alumni Network (UCCLAN) Delegation for IPBES 8 on Item 7(b):

Scoping report for a thematic assessment of the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and the determinants of transformative change and options for achieving the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity (transformative change assessment)

June 21, 2021

The University of Cambridge Conservation Leadership Alumni Network (UCCLAN) includes over 180 conservation leaders in 80 countries around the world. UCCLAN believes that it is critical that the IPBES members strongly support approving the scoping report and initiating the transformative change assessment without delay.

We note that by its very nature -- investigating how to implement change -- this assessment articulates key options to achieve systematic transformational change. However, we are in a planetary crisis for biodiversity that is drastically impacting the peoples of every nation. What's more, this crisis is intimately connected to climate change and cannot be unwound. Transformational change must be assessed in this context and explicitly consider connected impacts to foster the achievement of the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity, Paris Agreement, and the Sustainable Development Goals. Connected impacts include:

* Rising financial costs for basic needs including food and water.
* Increasing natural disaster recovery costs in the short and long term.
* Ballooning health impacts and costs.
* Energy costs that are rising more quickly than systems can handle.
* Costs of replacing the ecosystem services from species that were once "free."
* Costs related to large numbers of displaced peoples and mass migrations.
* Large scale disasters, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, that cause mass economic downturns.
* Impacts on numerous industries, such as tourism, due to collapsing ecosystems.

It is therefore only in the interest of IPBES members to facilitate the needs of the experts leading the assessment so that they can fully investigate the questions posed without constriction and outline policy response options that will facilitate fundamental, transformative change.

These include fundamentally uncomfortable topics that must not be blocked due to fears of what the assessment will reveal about the industries and systems we currently rely upon. We support the assessment's scope to review the challenges of achieving transformative change (Chapter 4). However, we recommend that that the analysis delve further into these challenges and include the following uncomfortable topics in the Transformative Change Assessment:

1. Alternative economic systems that do not rely on endless growth as a measure of wealth.
2. Alternatives to classic concepts of development that are inclusive of more determinants of human wellbeing.
3. Barriers to inclusive participation in transformational change including inequity, colonialism, and prejudices towards minorities, women, and indigenous peoples.
4. Entrenched vested interests and systems that may present challenges to change.
5. Legal and policy barriers for change at the international and national levels.
6. Direct discussion of the links between energy, climate change, and biodiversity as a transformative change issue.
7. The rights of all of nature to exist and thrive, not just humans.

8. An open approach to case studies, scenarios and pathways to change.
9. Direct discussion of industrial barriers to transformative change, such as raw materials mining, fossil fuel extraction, unsustainable agriculture, and logging.
10. The potential gains, benefits, and opportunities from Transformative Change that may arise for people at all levels of society, including women and indigenous peoples, to balance discussion of potentially negative impacts and trade offs.
11. Visions for just and equitable transitions.

Furthermore, we support language that goes beyond mere "sustainability" and embraces concepts of resilience, restoration, and regeneration as we believe these concepts more accurately reflect the IPBES definition of Transformative Change.