

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

Scoping report on assessing the interlinkages among biodiversity, climate, water, food, energy and health (nexus 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 assessment without delay.

It is critical that the nexus assessment thoroughly incorporate the interlinkages between biodiversity and climate change and further explore the synergies and trade-offs related to all elements of the nexus (food, water, health and energy). At a minimum, climate change and biodiversity should be considered in all three-way or higher interactions between the nexus elements as part of the assessment of global and regional trends and status in higher-order interactions (Chapter 3). Biodiversity and climate change are intertwined through mechanistic links and feedbacks with all elements of the nexus assessment. For example, climate change exacerbates risks to biodiversity, natural and managed habitats; water supply and food supply. At the same time, natural and managed ecosystems and their biodiversity play a key role in the fluxes of greenhouse gases, supporting climate adaptation, reducing the risk of future pandemics, provision of clean water and provision of food. Functional separation of climate change from the nexus elements creates a risk of incompletely identifying, understanding, and dealing with the connections between these elements. Only by considering climate and biodiversity as parts of the same complex problem, which also includes the actions and motivations and aspirations of people, can solutions be developed that avoid maladaptation and maximize the beneficial outcomes.

We feel that a missing component of the nexus assessment is the scope to assess the legal rights of nature in law, policy, and practice. Legal rights to nature include, but are not limited to, the intrinsic value of nature, legal personhood, and legal right to exist, thrive and evolve. We recommend that the scope of the nexus assessment be expanded to include legal rights to nature, an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages and, a review of how legal rights to nature may facilitate a transition to a sustainable future.

Although we support the reference to the Sustainable Development Goals throughout the nexus assessment, we feel that a priority focus on the SDG's is too narrow. The document needs to reinforce that other critical global agreements including the CBD Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the 2050 Vision, and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and analyse which nexus interactions are most influential in determining how these policy goals can be achieved. We encourage the scoping report to also mention climate change targets (e.g. 1.5oC) exclusively under the Paris Climate Agreement. Finally, we recommend a more transformative and aspirational end goal than 'sustainable futures' which is mentioned throughout the nexus assessment. Nature positive future, restoration economy, regenerative future are all alternative endpoints that seek to capture the urgency of the multiple crises we face and the aspiration to achieve transformative change.

We support the IPBES nexus assessment's review of economic and financing issues such as inclusive wealth, subsidies, and externalities as part of Chapter 5. We encourage a critical analysis of harmful agricultural, resource extraction and fuel subsidies (among others) and the impact subsidisation has on water, soil, air, habitat loss and the loss of biodiversity. Furthermore, we strongly recommend that the nexus report scope adds the predominant economic system (Gross Domestic

Product) as an indirect driver of biodiversity loss and climate change. Biodiversity underpins all aspects of the economy and new economic models are needed urgently to address biodiversity loss and cease treating biodiversity as an externality. Transformative economic models such as doughnut economics, post-growth economy and economy of well-being (among others) should be explored and explained to policy makers.

UCCLAN supports the response options outlined in Chapter 7 (Energy) with minor amendments. First, we would like to see that climate sources and sinks are explicitly discussed in this chapter as they relate to biodiversity. For example, the impact of the removal of old growth forest for the construction of energy infrastructure. Second, the appropriate use of the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimise, offset, restore) should be reinforced. Too often policies related to energy allow for steps in the mitigation hierarchy to be skipped resulting in perverse biodiversity outcomes. Finally, we recommend that options to 'advance the transition from carbon to non-carbon-based energy' consider the recent International Energy Agency's (IEA) *Net Zero by 2050* report which indicates that there can be no new fossil fuel production if we are to achieve the Paris agreement goals.

We broadly support the analysis of response options outlined in Chapter 8 (Food). We suggest adding to the examination the use of synthetic pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, and fertilizers and their impact on nexus elements (particularly biodiversity) and how their use may be transformed to be more sustainable. Chapter 8 could also explore the impact of human-wildlife conflict on agriculture systems and biodiversity and provide response options to reduce human-wildlife conflicts.

In respect to Chapter 9 (Human health) we support the nexus assessments response options, particularly an emphasis on the linkages between biodiversity and disease prevention. We advocate for the explicit inclusion of response options for pollution to reduce human health impacts. For example, urban green spaces, water filtration and infrastructure, reduction in microplastics, reduced use and distribution of chemicals.

Finally, we are encouraged to see the explicit consideration of conservation actors and how we can create the changes outlined in Chapter 5. However, we must reiterate that conservation actors cannot bear the full responsibility of transformational change to conserve biodiversity and address climate change. Conservation and restoration need to be completed in tandem with transformational change of global economic systems, food production, energy systems and human health. Business as usual is not an option. If global transformative change is not achieved, conservation actors will not be able to address extensive loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. We encourage country delegates to be ambitious in the implementation policies that sustainably manage and restore ecosystems. These actions must be in support of, and not in lieu of ambitious reductions in emissions from fossil fuels and land use change.