



**Statement from the International
Union for Conservation of Nature**
United Nations High-level Political Forum
7-16 July 2020, New York

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

2020 has been heralded as a super year for nature. And while several of the key milestones have been postponed as the world responds to the COVID-19 crisis, we would like to emphasise that the urgency for action on sustainable development has never been greater.

Indeed, the pandemic underscores that humanity's treatment of the natural world has profound impacts on global health and economic wellbeing, and that the global community must take strong and decisive measures to mitigate the growing risk posed by zoonotic diseases, whose transmission to humans is enabled by the degradation of ecosystems, loss of biodiversity, and illegal trade in wildlife.

By now, it is clear that the pandemic is adversely impacting progress on all 17 Goals. And as is so often the case, the brunt of these consequences will be borne by the most vulnerable, including those that are suffering from the ravages of environmental degradation, many with limited access to adequate healthcare for financial or geographic reasons.

As the Secretary-General has noted, progress on the Goals has been highly uneven, with gains in some areas compromised by backsliding in others. Around the world, species are going extinct 1,000 times faster than the natural rate, and more than a quarter of all species on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species are now in danger of extinction. Climate change continues to be a threat multiplier, undermining development gains by compromising agricultural production, increasing the frequency and intensity of severe weather events, and contributing to sea level rise and ocean deoxygenation, among others.

At this moment, governments are rightly focused on emergency responses. Yet looking forward, humanity must recognise more than ever the crucial link between a healthy planet and healthy people. A healthy biosphere is of paramount importance for achieving sustainable development in all dimensions, and we as a global community must strive to restore the planet's resilience by helping biodiversity and ecosystems to recover.

Nature-based Solutions – centred on the protection, restoration and sustainable management of the world's ecosystems – have a vitally important role to play in mitigating climate change, land degradation, and biodiversity loss, as well as in achieving economic and social Goals such as poverty alleviation, food security, good health, job creation, and wellbeing. They can and should play a major role in our collective aim to build back better from the crisis.

The growing importance of Nature-based Solutions for global development will be a key pillar of IUCN's World Conservation Congress, to be convened in January 2021 in Marseille, France. The Congress will bring together leaders from governments, civil society, business, youth, and Indigenous Peoples to mobilise ambitious action for conservation towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the coming years.

We reemphasise that the 2030 Agenda is more urgent than ever as a framework for building back better in this decade of action and delivery.

Thank you.