

SAFEGUARDING NATURE AS THE BASIS OF ALL LIFE



IUCN NL STRATEGY
2020-2024

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBOs	Community-Based Organisations
CoP	Conference of the Parties
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IUCN NL	International Union for Conservation of Nature National Committee of The Netherlands
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OECMs	Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IUCN NL has set out a multi-annual strategy to guide our efforts and investments in 2020-2024. As bedrock of our efforts, we have collectively reaffirmed that our ultimate goal is **to safeguard nature as the basis of all life.**

We believe the best overall strategy to meet Dutch and global nature conservation goals builds upon collaboration across borders and sectors, deploying each organisation’s unique strengths and expertise and embracing innovation and adaptation in our efforts. The relationship with our members, partners, and donors, and our commitment to the landscapes where we work are critical elements to this end.

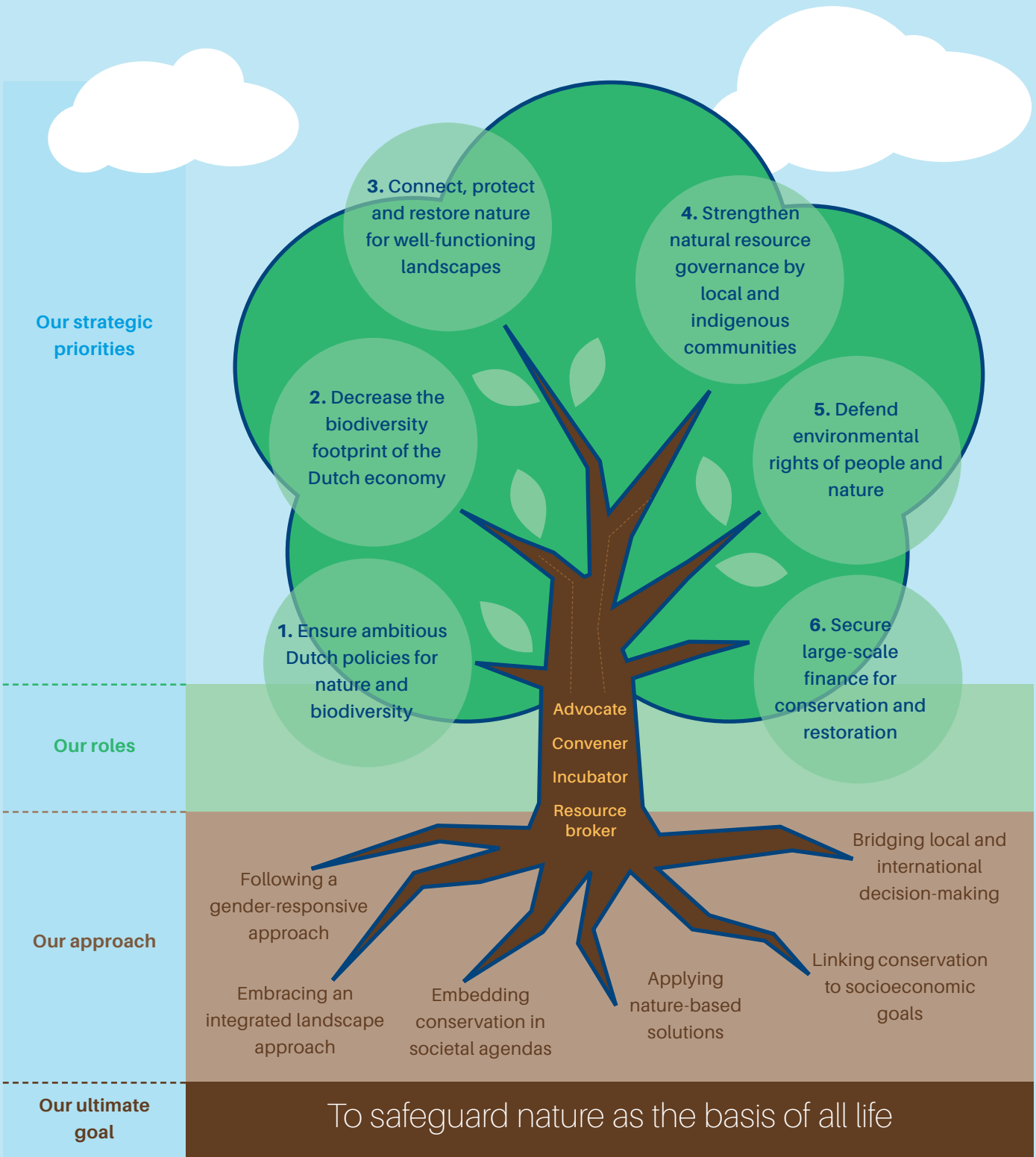
As we collaborate with others who share our vision, we have defined six strategic priorities where we can maximise our own contribution to Dutch and global nature conservation goals and as part of the upcoming IUCN Programme 2021-2024 ‘One Nature, One Future’. While this remains at a draft stage, all of our priority ambitions are linked to key results across the prioritised programme areas.

These six priorities will guide our interventions over the 2020-2024 period:

- 1. Ensure ambitious Dutch policies for nature and biodiversity
- 2. Decrease the biodiversity footprint of the Dutch economy
- 3. Connect, protect, and restore nature for well-functioning landscapes
- 4. Strengthen natural resource governance by local and indigenous communities
- 5. Defend environmental rights of people and nature
- 6. Secure large-scale finance for conservation and restoration

Our 2020-2024 strategy reaffirms our commitment to nature conservation

IUCN NL STRATEGY 2020-2024



1. INTRODUCTION

The world is living through a decisive moment in its history and in the conservation of nature. At this pivotal moment (§1.1) we recognize an opportunity for IUCN NL to address these challenges, building on who we are (§1.2) and what we achieved in the past (§1.3).

1.1 INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT FOR NATURE CONSERVATION

Living in what we may consider a global ecological crisis, we conservation organisations need to step up our efforts. As the 2019 report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services (IPBES) concludes, global biodiversity remains poorly known and rapidly declining, with only sparse and insufficient signals of positive change. Projections for these trends are expected to worsen in business-as-usual scenarios, driven by ongoing growth in consumption, unsustainable uses of nature, and the mounting threat of climate change¹.

For actors working on nature conservation, the operating space has become increasingly complex to navigate. The existing governance system is being disrupted by geopolitical power shifts, weakening political and governmental institutions, increasing social and economic inequalities, and new technologies.

Nevertheless, we see hope as societies are increasingly aware of nature’s plight and place higher demands on all actors to protect biodiversity. Governments and businesses have responded with more sustainable policies and business models. The 2020 Convention on Biological Diversity CoP15 in Kunming, China, undoubtedly presents a critical opportunity for humanity to redefine its relationship with nature.

1.2 ABOUT IUCN NL

IUCN NL is a Netherlands-based, self-supporting organisation, and an integral part of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). We represent the union in the role of the secretariat of the National Committee of The Netherlands, committing to its mission and goals, cooperating with it, and voicing its vision, positions, and standards. Through our new strategy, we will make a significant contribution to the new IUCN Programme 2021-2024 (in development, to be approved during the World Conservation Congress in June 2020).

As part of the global union, we embrace the IUCN vision of a just world that values and conserves nature. We share the IUCN mission to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

As bedrock of our efforts, we have collectively reaffirmed our ultimate goal is to safeguard nature as the basis of all life. We intend to deliver effective, long-lasting solutions to protect nature. We are aware of the complexities and own laws of nature and acknowledge its intrinsic value and its essential role sustaining humankind and every other life form on the planet.

NOTE

¹ IPBES. 2019. Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany.



1.3 PAST ACHIEVEMENTS

As a nature conservation organisation, working internationally but rooted in the Netherlands, we have over 40 years of experience in advocating and rallying support for conservation in the political agenda, advancing approaches to reduce the environmental impact of economic activities, financing and supporting conservation work and spaces, and bridging conservation and development efforts. Especially over the last 20 years, many of our efforts have focused on safeguarding nature as the basis of livelihoods in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This has helped us to build a strong network of over 200 local nature organisations across 30 countries in these regions.

Highlights of past achievements

- In the Netherlands, we engaged in dialogue with the Dutch government over the conflicts between the new Nature Bill and its commitments to international conventions.
- The publication of our Soy Monitor in 2019 geared the industry to adopt higher sustainability standards and led the transition towards sustainable and deforestation-free soy.
- In Brazil, we supported the reconnection of forest fragments that allowed the golden lion tamarin population to resurge.
- In Myanmar, we helped the indigenous Karen people to become officially recognised by the government as guardians of their forest.
- Thanks to the efforts of our partners, 24 Latin American countries signed a legally binding declaration to guarantee the safety of environmental defenders in their territories.
- In Ghana, by investing in a shea tree planting project, we helped demonstrate returns on investments and mobilised private funding to expand the plantations.

2. OUR DISTINCT APPROACH TO NATURE CONSERVATION

We believe we have a distinctive approach to nature conservation, which brings unique added value to the efforts we share with our members and partners. Our distinct approach stems from our beliefs and guiding principles (§2.1), as well as our organisational strengths (§2.2). It consists of six core elements (§2.3) that permeate our work and four roles (§2.4) we play in the conservation arena.

2.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding principles stem from our values and beliefs and define our way of working. They are the foundation of our work.

- We believe in the intrinsic value of biodiversity as well as the function of nature as the basis of all life. We acknowledge its crucial importance for humankind and livelihoods.
- We are a union. As such, we will always seek cooperation with and between IUCN member organisations, commissions, and Secretariat to advance our conservation targets.
- We change the rules of the game: without disregarding short-term gains, we believe in creating systemic change as a necessary, long-term solution to safeguard nature, for example through the local embedding of nature conservation.
- We work in an inclusive and socially fair way, supportive of diversity and wellbeing. We are committed to respect internationally recognised human rights as signatories of the Conservation Initiative on Human Rights.
- Our work is based on IUCN knowledge and standards, latest scientific knowledge, and local and indigenous knowledge.

2.2 ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTHS

Core strengths give our organisation a unique added value to make a difference for nature conservation.

- **Multidisciplinary expertise:** We have a broad range of in-house expertise, combining different professional backgrounds, skill sets, and regional and thematic fields of knowledge. This enables us to take on complex challenges and come to integrated, long-term solutions.
- **Extensive network:** We have a strong network combining our position in the broad IUCN union, our role as member platform in the Netherlands, and our partner and collaborating organisations. This allows us to connect and convene parties across boundaries and sectors: government, civil society, business, and scientific organisations.
- **Oversight:** Through our network and portfolio, we have a good view and insight of what are important, on-the-ground issues and global and regional trends. This enables us to connect local to global, increasing synergies and effectiveness in policies.
- **Fact-based:** We are a professional, trustworthy partner and a neutral, solution-oriented organisation that can mediate between interests in a constructive way. This allows us to initiate and accelerate processes towards joint knowledge-based solutions.



2.3 THE CORE ELEMENTS OF OUR APPROACH

- These are the core elements that constitute our approach. We intend to strengthen and continue embedding these in all our programs and projects.
- We follow an **integrated landscape approach** focused on long-term changes where we take into account all relevant issues and bring together all relevant stakeholders in an area.
 - In the landscape, we aim to make optimal use of the myriad of goods and services provided by healthy ecosystems to address major societal challenges by embracing **nature-based solutions**.
 - We link nature conservation to the **broader societal agenda** and we mainstream social justice and local economic development goals throughout our work, embracing the SDGs as the overarching framework.
 - We take a **gender-responsive approach**, underpinned in IUCN’s comprehensive rights-based framework, to overcome gender inequality through our conservation efforts.
 - We make use of our position in the conservation arena to **build bridges from local to international levels of decision-making**, connecting local and grassroots organisations with governments, global initiatives, and platforms.
 - And finally, we **embed nature conservation in local, societal agendas**, cultivating local ownership and bottom-up actions, empowering civil society organisations, raising awareness, and mobilising stakeholders.

2.4 OUR ROLES IN THE NATURE CONSERVATION ARENA

- Delivering on conservation challenges requires big efforts by many and broad collaboration between organisations that all contribute through their unique added value. As a member- and network-based organisation we are a motor of such a collaboration, fostering coordination and joint action.
- In order to best leverage our strengths to support and empower our members, allies, and partners to jointly catalyse the change we want to see in the world, we believe we have four key roles to play in the conservation arena, both in the Netherlands and internationally:
- **Advocate:** pushing for the adoption of greener ideas and principles throughout the governance sphere.
 - **Convener:** fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration, breaking down silos, and achieving greater drive for nature conservation in the public agenda.
 - **Incubator:** encouraging innovation and recruiting new partners to explore non-traditional and complementary approaches to stimulate change.
 - **Resource broker:** unlocking access to finance, knowledge, and networks, thus empowering our partners with the necessary resources and space to achieve common objectives.



We link nature conservation to the broader societal agenda

3. OVERVIEW OF STRATEGY AND AMBITIONS FOR 2020-2024

Our ultimate goal is to safeguard nature as the basis of all life. In the 2020-2024 period, our efforts will be focused on six priority ambitions (§3.1), where we believe our organisation can have the greatest impact. Simultaneously, we will explore innovation opportunities (§3.2), and invest in our broad base (§3.3) and our linkages to international nature conservation efforts, including the IUCN Programme 2021-2024 (§3.4). To improve our effectiveness and continue developing as an organisation, we also pay attention to our strategy towards members (§3.5), geographic choices (§3.6) and partners (§3.7).



3.1 OUR PRIORITY AMBITIONS FOR 2020-2024

Our efforts will be focused on six priority ambitions where we believe our organisation can have the greatest impact through our distinctive strengths and assets, our approach to nature conservation, and the experience we have gained over the past 40 years.

Annex 1 ‘Our priorities in depth’ contains more detailed information on these six priorities.

- 1. Ensure ambitious Dutch policies for nature and biodiversity**
→ Goal: National nature and biodiversity policy complies with international agreements and standards.
- 2. Decrease the biodiversity footprint of the Dutch economy**
→ Goal: Dutch stakeholders increase adoption and implementation of stronger sustainability principles and practices for key commodities (soy, palm oil, metals for energy transition).
- 3. Connect, protect, and restore nature for well-functioning landscapes**
→ Goal: Habitat loss and fragmentation and ecosystem degradation in core natural areas within multifunctional landscapes is halted.
- 4. Strengthen natural resource governance by local and indigenous communities**
→ Goal: Local and indigenous people are empowered to protect and conserve nature in their territories.
- 5. Defend environmental rights of people and nature**
→ Goal: There is a healthy civic environment that stops violations of rights of people and nature.
- 6. Secure large-scale finance for conservation and restoration**
→ Goal: Private and public finance is redirected to scalable ecosystem restoration and conservation programs.

3.2 EXPLORING INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO NATURE CONSERVATION

We will embed innovation in the six priorities mentioned in §3.1, and simultaneously we will explore exciting and emerging topics. Our initial thoughts point to interesting opportunities in topics such as:

- Accelerating the ‘rights revolution for nature’ and working to achieve granting legal rights to nature and biodiversity.
- Strengthening landscape identity and sense of belonging (reconnecting people to nature, also on religious and cultural terms) to secure protection of nature areas.
- Normalising alternative worldviews and ideals to redefine societal decision-making and our relationship with nature, including those coming from unconventional or undervalued perspectives.

3.3 MAINTAINING AND UPDATING A BROAD BASE

While we will concentrate our efforts on these six priority ambitions in the 2020-2024 period, we will maintain and update our knowledge base, extensive network, and multidisciplinary expertise. This offers continued opportunities for adaptation and innovation. As such we will stay in tune with relevant developments in an extensive array of topics and conservation issues around the world.

3.4 LINKAGES TO INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION SCIENCE AND EFFORTS

We embrace the state-of-the-art, science-based analyses, Theories of Change, and identified priorities of internationally-recognised institutions as the general framework of our work.

Our work is firmly grounded in internationally-recognised knowledge and frameworks, notably the new IUCN Programme 2021-2024, the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services (IPBES Global Assessment 2019), the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD Aichi target and post 2020 framework), and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Other important global agreements we work with are the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, and the UN Working Group on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises.

Our work is firmly grounded in internationally-recognised knowledge and frameworks

3.5 OUR MEMBER STRATEGY

As a national member platform and part of an international union, our members, united in the National Committee for IUCN in the Netherlands, are at the core of our strategy. This is especially true for the first two of our six strategic priorities which are explicitly focused on policies in the Netherlands. We will mobilise, convene, and where possible unite our members around joint interests, initiating and

supporting joint strategies. Moreover, we will seek active collaboration with our members to realise the goals of all our strategic priorities, on the basis of interest and potential synergy. Therefore, we strive towards a strong and representative members platform, both in members and in joint activities. IUCN NL will install and support platforms of groups of members around themes and topics of joint interest, aimed at developing joint positions and strategic collective approaches.

Dutch IUCN Members



3.6 OUR GEOGRAPHIC STRATEGY

As an international nature conservation organisation, IUCN NL aims to safeguard nature all over the world, notably vulnerable and threatened nature and biodiversity. Our distinct approach can, in principle, be applied in any ecoregion or landscape where the boundary conditions for making a difference are in place. As a project organisation, flexibility allows us to seize opportunities while seeking added value amid a rich field of organisations, aiming for a distinct contribution and avoiding duplication. At the same time, the impact we seek is often long-term, requiring prolonged efforts.

We therefore follow a two pillar geographic strategy:

- Seizing opportunities for a distinct contribution in Asia, Africa, and Latin America: we seek project-based activities in countries and landscapes where we see opportunities to make a difference using our distinct approach for safeguarding Key Biodiversity Areas.
- Aiming to realise long-term commitment and impact: in a selective set of priority landscapes (ecological systems) we pursue long-term partnerships in order to realise specific fundamental changes for safeguarding Key Biodiversity Areas. Here, we aim to combine our full strengths and strategic priorities in a portfolio of projects reinforcing on another, working with our local partners. We will identify and select landscapes in Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well in the Netherlands, including the Dutch Caribbean

3.7 OUR PARTNER STRATEGY

Next to our strong domestic membership base, our broad network of partners, both in the Netherlands and in Asia, Africa, and Latin America form an important foundation of our work and a key asset of IUCN NL. As part of our new strategy we will approach and manage our network and collaborations more strategically. An important aim is to maintain our international network of local CBOs (Community-Based Organisations) and strengthen it with new partners. For both our CSO partners and collaborations in the public (government) and private (companies) domains, we will formulate a strategy explicating our role in and criteria for collaboration.

We have chosen to fulfil the IUCN niche in the Netherlands in full

How are we changing?

With this new strategy, we build on successful parts of our work from past years while accommodating for developments and choosing new accents that will lead to notable changes. Fundamentally, we confirm our core focus on safeguarding nature, both as a basis for the many benefits to human society and for its intrinsic value.

A significant change in our role in the Netherlands is that we have chosen to fulfil the IUCN niche in the Netherlands in full, thus stepping up our efforts for and contribution to Dutch nature and biodiversity conservation, including in the Dutch Caribbean (the constituent countries of

Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten, and the special municipalities of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, and Saba). Mobilising and working with our members will be at the core of this.

Our policy towards the private sector will change, moving from ‘greening business’ as a strategic goal to making business engagement an integral part of our approach and interventions. We will increase our focus on the essential role of local communities as the prime stakeholders of local nature and ecosystems, paying special attention to indigenous peoples and communities living in and managing important nature areas. Throughout our work, we will explicitly consider gender aspects.



4. WHAT TO EXPECT FROM US

With our multidisciplinary mission and broad working field across different sectors, collaboration is key to realising the new strategy. Here, we highlight our offer to different groups of stakeholders, including the IUCN community (§4.1), our partners (§4.2) and donors and funding organisations (§4.3).

4.1 THE IUCN COMMUNITY

Dutch IUCN Members

Dutch IUCN Members can expect an active, diverse national platform around nature and biodiversity where issues of joint interest are discussed and where different views are shared in a constructive manner. Support will be offered to initiate and develop joint activities and strategies, including on lobby and advocacy. IUCN NL will convene and bring in knowledge and perspectives from the international IUCN policies and network, and facilitate the interaction with the other parts of the IUCN union. We will seek the development and acquisition of joint projects with members, aimed at realising the strategic ambitions.

Dutch Government

The Government of the Netherlands, as State Member of IUCN, can expect a trusted partner in fact-based policy advice in the big challenges in relation to nature and biodiversity, notably our strategic priorities. We will operate as a liaison between government policy and civil society, including the IUCN members, assisting dialogue and constructive interaction. As a project organisation, IUCN NL will be a professional partner in the implementation of government policies, initiatives, and subsidised projects and programs in collaboration with other relevant organisations, notably IUCN member organisations.

IUCN

IUCN can expect an active, innovative and constructive partner in the IUCN community, committed to the IUCN Programme 2021-2024, policy development, and effective governance of the union. IUCN NL will seek collaboration with the Secretariat and the IUCN Commissions where opportunities occur, including in joint programs and the development of positions and policies.

4.2 OUR PARTNERS

Local partners

Our local partners in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, predominantly local Community-Based Organisations and NGOs, can expect a committed and resourceful partner and - where relevant - an open, professional, and flexible donor. Where relevant we will introduce our partners to our network and exchange knowledge working towards shared goals. We will make special efforts to network partners across regions and continents, aiming at mutual exchange and added value in collective strength.

Other partner organisations

National and international partner organisations can expect a trusted and professional partner with multidisciplinary expertise and a broad network in the big challenges in relation to nature and biodiversity, notably our strategic priorities. Where relevant, we will seek collaboration in joint projects and programmes.

Companies and financial sector institutions

Companies and the institutions in the financial sector can expect an independent, knowledgeable, constructive, and critical partner in their efforts to minimise the negative impacts of their operations and to deliver positive contributions to nature and biodiversity.

Foundations and private donors

Foundations and other private donors can expect a committed partner and an open and professional project organisation in realising long-term change and impact in the field of safeguarding nature and ecosystems. IUCN NL has the capacity and experience to manage complex international programmes and administering funds according to modern standards and best practices. We specialise in working with and subcontracting local NGOs and grass-roots organisations, including in the most challenging countries in the world.

4.3 DONORS AND FUNDING ORGANISATIONS

Governments

Governments and government agencies can expect a professional project organisation in designing and implementing programmes and project in line with policies. IUCN NL has the capacity and experience to manage complex international programmes and administering funds according to modern standards and best practices in public accounting.



5. CONCLUSIONS

Through the strategic priorities we have defined for the coming years, we choose to intensify efforts on a set of goals where we think we can make a distinct difference in the broad world of global nature conservation, deploying our unique potential as part of IUCN. Overall, we have confirmed our commitment to and focus on the conservation of nature and biodiversity, not just for its services to humanity but as an end in itself. To realise our ambitions, we build on our track record and successful initiatives in past years which we expect to have high potential to make lasting impact in coming years while we explore and expand on new topics and approaches.

Overall, we have confirmed our commitment to and focus on the conservation of nature and biodiversity

THANK YOU

The ambitions outlined in this Strategy can only be realised with the support of our donors, staff, partners and volunteers. Your support is our greatest asset.

We would like to specifically express our huge gratitude to all donors who currently support our work.



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Rijksoverheid

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ANNEX
OUR
PRIORITIES
IN DEPTH

Impact goal: to safeguard nature as the basis for all life



1. Ensure ambitious Dutch policies for nature and biodiversity

Goal: National nature and biodiversity policy complies with international agreements and standards



Outcome 1.a: IUCN members, including the NL government, comply with international agreements in relation to nature and biodiversity in the Netherlands, notably the CBD post-2020 targets and the SDGs, and conform to IUCN standards and knowledge in domestic policy

Outcome 1.b: Civil society and other non-state actors participate in the development of international nature and biodiversity policy, in particular the CBD post-2020 framework

Outcome 1.c: Dutch government mainstreams the safeguarding of global biodiversity in international cooperation

Outcome 1.d: Nature organisations, notably IUCN members, come to a coherent strategy for nature and biodiversity in the Netherlands



2. Decrease the biodiversity footprint of the Dutch economy

Goal: Dutch stakeholders increase adoption and implementation of stronger sustainability principles and practices for key commodities (soy, palm oil, metals for energy transition)



Outcome 2.a: Dutch government adopts and implements sustainability policies and practices in the production and extraction of key commodities

Outcome 2.b: Dutch financial institutions adopt and implement stronger sustainability policies and practices in the production and extraction of key commodities

Outcome 2.c: Dutch industry players and consumer facing companies adopt and implement stronger sustainability policies and practices in the production and extraction of key commodities



3. Connect, protect, and restore nature for well-functioning landscapes

Goal: Habitat loss and fragmentation and ecosystem degradation in core natural areas within multifunctional landscapes is halted



Outcome 3.a: Local groups restore and increase landscape connectivity on strategically acquired and leased land

Outcome 3.b: Local groups, in collaboration with governments and other relevant stakeholders, develop sustainable governance mechanisms and strategies for protected areas and OECMs in multifunctional landscapes

Outcome 3.c: Local groups successfully lobby for efficiently managed protected areas and OECMs

Outcome 3.d: Governments, CSO's, local communities, and other stakeholders create and support protected areas and OECMs

Outcome 3.e: Governments, CSOs, local communities, and other stakeholders initiate and support restoration efforts of degraded ecosystems and habitats



4. Strengthen natural resource governance by local and indigenous communities

Goal: Local and indigenous people are empowered to protect and conserve nature in their territories



Outcome 4.a: Local and indigenous people have effective ownership and/or user rights over their land

Outcome 4.b: Local and indigenous people effectively implement and monitor local governance mechanisms for sustainable management and use of resources

Outcome 4.c: Indigenous communities are fully engaged in (co-)governing and managing protected and conserved areas according to their rights as determined in the UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)

Outcome 4.d: Governments, CSOs, and other stakeholders recognise the value of other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in achieving national nature conservation targets



5. Defend environmental rights of people and nature

Goal: There is a healthy civic environment that stops violations of rights of people and nature



Outcome 5.a: Local communities and economic actors resolve their competing claims on land maintaining the integrity of key natural and wilderness areas

Outcome 5.b: States and society protect environmental defenders and celebrate their work; other actors respect their rights

Outcome 5.c: Civil society and local actors are empowered to secure a healthy operational space

Outcome 5.d: Civil society actors influence the development of jurisprudence on the enforcement of existing laws and regulations protecting rights for nature

Outcome 5.e: Governmental and international authorities combat and prevent environmental crimes, specifically on wildlife crimes and other transgressions of environmental laws and policies



6. Secure large-scale finance for conservation and restoration

Goal: Private and public finance is redirected to scalable ecosystem restoration and conservation programs



Outcome 6.a: Community organisations, civil society, government, companies, and financial institutions co-develop an effective governance system to secure a pre-investment enabling environment

Outcome 6.b: These actors develop models to attract public and private finance for suitable business cases in restoration and conservation

Outcome 6.c: In partnerships, these actors close deals with new types of investors for initial funding of these models

Outcome 6.d: The successful partnerships secure funding to scale up their business cases to deliver ecological returns

1. Ensure ambitious Dutch policies for nature and biodiversity

Goal: National nature and biodiversity policy complies with international agreements and standards



CONTEXT

The Netherlands, including the Dutch Caribbean, has lost its frontrunner position in biodiversity conservation, both domestically and in international cooperation. A key barrier for improved action is the limited links between national actors and international agreements, strategies, and know-how (SDGs, CBD, and IUCN). This hinders both our influence on international policies and an international perspective on domestic policies.

A second barrier is the lack of a shared vision and strategy on the future of nature and biodiversity in the Netherlands. While promising progress has been made through the Delta Plan for Biodiversity Recovery, more coherence is both necessary and possible, and would benefit the policies required for compliance with international standards.

OUR AMBITION

Our long-term ambition is to bring the Netherlands among the world’s leading nations in nature and biodiversity conservation, both domestically and internationally. Hence, we will serve as a nexus between our members and other relevant actors in the Netherlands and the international policy arenas (SDGs, CBD, and IUCN), enhancing communication in both directions and enabling international nature

conservation perspectives to be embedded in domestic action.

Intended outcomes by 2024

- **1a.** IUCN members, including the Dutch government, lead in international agreements in relation to nature and biodiversity in the Netherlands, notably the CBD post-2020 targets and the SDGs, and conform to IUCN standards and knowledge in domestic policy.
- **1b.** Civil society and other non-state actors participate in the development of international nature and biodiversity policy, in particular the CBD post-2020 framework.
- **1c.** Dutch government mainstreams the safeguarding of global biodiversity in international cooperation.
- **1d.** Nature organisations, notably IUCN members, come to a coherent strategy for nature and biodiversity in the Netherlands.

OUR APPROACH

Building on our distinct roles and approach as IUCN NL, we will step up our efforts as policy advisor and advocate of nature and biodiversity. We will serve as the voice of IUCN in the Netherlands and facilitate for our members, IUCN commissions and experts, and international network to contribute to the national debate on nature conservation. Specifically, we will focus on efforts on the translation of the CBD’s New Deal for Nature and People post-2020 framework and the IUCN Programme 2021-2024 to the Dutch context, policy development, and member strategies. We will monitor and assess national progress and implementation on these efforts.

Conversely, we will help Dutch green organisations and experts, strengthening and coordinating their voices, to positively influence international debates

and policy developments. Building on our current activities, we will strengthen our support of the Delta Plan for Biodiversity Recovery and, as national coordinator for SDG 15 Life on Land, we will increase our efforts to link nature to all other SDGs.

2. Decrease the biodiversity footprint of the Dutch economy

Goal: Dutch stakeholders increase adoption and implementation of stronger sustainability principles and practices for key commodities (soy, palm oil, metals for energy transition)



CONTEXT

The unsustainable production and extraction of agro- and mining commodities is a major driver of biodiversity loss worldwide. Key commodities such as soy, palm oil, and the metals required for the energy transition, are major drivers of deforestation and land use change due to their scale, location, practices, and forecasted growth. Soy is the key global commodity for animal and human consumption and delivers highly demanded meal and vegetable oil, while palm oil is the most productive vegetable oil crop worldwide, suitable for many purposes in food and other industries. At the same time, the transition to a carbon-free energy system has increased the demand for Rare Earth Elements and other metals, and has resulted in pushes from the mining industry to expand infrastructure and extraction into high-biodiversity areas.

While sustainable (or responsible) principles and practices exist for these industries, their adoption and implementation remains insufficient due to lack of incentives, monitoring mechanisms, and conflicts of interest. The Netherlands has a significant footprint on global landscapes, as well as the possibility to influence these industries, through its consumption, trading, and investment activities.

OUR AMBITION

Our long-term ambition is to increase the adoption and implementation of sustainable sourcing and investment of Dutch stakeholders on commodities and extractives. We have identified Dutch-based governance, financial, and consumer-facing organisations as key leverage points in these commodity chains. We will encourage these key actors to undertake shifts in their policies and practices, aiming to increase the adoption of stronger (mandatory and voluntary) sustainable and/or responsible practices through landscapes and supply chains. Ultimately, this will lead to sustainable land use and direct benefits to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem functionality.

Intended outcomes by 2024

- **2a.** Dutch government adopts and implements sustainability policies and practices in the production and extraction of key commodities.
- **2b.** Dutch financial institutions adopt and implement stronger sustainability policies and practices in the production and extraction of key commodities.
- **2c.** Dutch industry players and consumer facing companies adopt and implement stronger sustainability policies and practices in the production and extraction of key commodities.

In the sometimes crowded field of footprint reduction, our added value rests in our position to forge synergy and cooperation. In the context of the agro commodities soy and palm oil, we see a need to guide governance shifts on topics such as government regulation, standard setting, and financial safeguards; while in the context of the metals for the energy transition, the priorities are to establish coalitions and enhance transparency.

OUR APPROACH

Leveraging our organisational roles and strengths, we aim to reach scale and impact by building bridges between government regulation, the application of due diligence and sustainability standards, and conservation programs. We will facilitate for local conservation and advocacy organisations in our networks to engage with Dutch actors and international organisations. We will broker pilot-like direct collaborations between companies and specific actors in producing countries, leaving the practical application however to those better equipped for that. We will maintain a general overview of the Dutch / EU footprint related to commodities, as priorities may shift under influence of politics, policies, prices, and our own programs.

3. Connect, protect, and restore nature for well-functioning landscapes

Goal: Habitat loss and fragmentation and ecosystem degradation in core natural areas within multifunctional landscapes is halted.



CONTEXT

Globally, large wilderness areas are disappearing at alarming rates and being converted into mosaic, multifunctional landscapes. While these landscapes do offer space for nature, overall ecosystem functionality is weakened and biodiversity is declining. Poor management practices are the main driver behind the fragmentation, conversion, pollution, and overall degradation of ecosystems in these landscapes, resulting in reduced ecological quality, shrinking of habitats, and loss of their required connectivity. High fragmentation in particular results in isolated species populations, increased competition for resources, and loss of genetic health.

In these multifunctional landscapes, nature functions as the ecological backbone of the system, protecting local biodiversity and delivering goods and services to users. A network of core natural areas, of sufficient coverage and quality, and buttressed on interconnected protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, is an effective counterbalance against ecosystem degradation and habitat loss.

OUR AMBITION

Our long-term ambition is to halt habitat loss and fragmentation and ecosystem degradation in core natural areas within multifunctional landscapes. Focusing on grasslands, forests, coastal- and freshwater wetlands and rivers, we will contribute to an effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative, well-connected system of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in these landscapes.

Intended outcomes by 2024

- **3a.** Local groups restore and increase landscape connectivity on strategically acquired and leased land.

- **3b.** Local groups, in collaboration with governments and other relevant stakeholders, develop sustainable governance mechanisms and strategies for protected areas and OECMs in multifunctional landscapes.
- **3c.** Local groups successfully lobby for efficiently managed protected areas and OECMs.
- **3d.** Governments, CSOs, local communities, and other stakeholders create and support protected areas and OECMs.
- **3e.** Governments, CSOs, local communities, and other stakeholders initiate and support restoration efforts of degraded ecosystems and habitats.

OUR APPROACH

We will convene and strengthen the capacity of CSOs to lobby governments and private sector for effective nature conservation at landscape scale. Together with local CSOs, we will develop strategies to support and strengthen protected areas and OECMs in multifunctional landscapes, in conjunction with land lease or acquisition, resource support, and sustainable land use governance mechanisms.

We will prioritise landscapes where the potential to protect endangered and keystone species is greatest, such as in Key Biodiversity Areas. We will encourage integrated landscape management and nature-based solutions focused on achieving connectivity, preventing further fragmentation, and restoring nature for healthy and vibrant ecosystems.

4. Strengthen natural resource governance by local and indigenous communities

Goal: Local and indigenous people are empowered to protect and conserve nature in their territories.



CONTEXT

There is a growing body of evidence showing that many of the territories and areas that are governed and conserved by indigenous and local people are among the richest and best conserved ecosystems on the planet. However, as reported by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services (IPBES) in 2019, and confirmed by our own experience at IUCN NL, nature governed and managed by indigenous peoples and local communities is under increasing pressure, as is their knowledge to conserve it. Indigenous women are, in particular, a much disenfranchised group and often the primary holders and intergenerational transmitters of traditional knowledge.

The expansion of industrial and small-scale agriculture and mining, and infrastructure development for energy, transportation, and other purposes present threats to nature governed by these communities. Powerful economic interests often prevail over traditional rights and needs; the voices and interests of communities are ignored or delegitimised in decision-making.

OUR AMBITION

Our long-term ambition is to empower local and indigenous people to protect and conserve nature in their territories, especially those living in or near Key Biodiversity Areas.

Intended outcomes by 2024

- **4a.** Local and indigenous people have effective ownership and/or user rights over their land.
- **4b.** Local and indigenous people effectively implement and monitor local governance mechanisms for sustainable management and use of resources.
- **4c.** Indigenous communities are fully engaged in (co-)governing and managing protected and conserved areas according to their rights as determined in the UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples).
- **4d.** Governments, CSOs, and other stakeholders recognise the value of other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in achieving national nature conservation targets.

OUR APPROACH

To achieve this, we will step up our support for capacity strengthening and advocacy efforts of local communities and indigenous people that share our conservation goals, as well as the CSOs that represent them. These partner CSOs work with local constituencies on a basis of trust, respect, and long-term commitment. We will work in a bottom-up and needs-driven fashion, connecting partners with international networks and UN mechanisms, so they can advocate for their rights and interests while also learning from others.

We will convene groups for exchange, so they have opportunities to learn about the challenges

of sustainable mechanisms of natural resource governance. We will facilitate a dialogue between CSOs aimed at finding sustainable answers to the challenges of a changing world (such as an advancing market economy, migration, and ambitions of the youth). We will advocate for the effective participation of indigenous and local communities in local governance mechanisms, based on their knowledge and capacities. Lastly, we will act as a resource broker between local CSOs and CBOs to stimulate the uptake of their knowledge and visions in international policies and fora, as well as ensure that scientific insights reach these communities.

5. Defend environmental rights of people and nature

Goal: There is a healthy civic environment that stops violations of rights of people and nature.



CONTEXT

The existing rules and regulations, voluntary or compulsory, that ensure the protection of our life support systems are not being implemented. Environmental crime and other transgressions are major drivers of nature destruction and degradation and, through it, of rights violations for people and nature. Illegal wildlife trade, infrastructural expansion, and mineral exploration, among other issues, result in the degradation and destruction of nature. This threatens basic human rights such as access to food and water security, a clean and safe environment, a stable climate, and social cohesion and happiness.

Across the world, civil society lacks the operational space to countervail these violations, in part due to a lack of recognition of the links between human rights and environmental destruction. Left unchecked, governments, private sector, and other key stakeholders do not prioritise the protection of their citizens' and future generations' long-term interests, failing to implement rules and regulations that ensure the protection of nature. Altogether, this leaves environmental defenders vulnerable to aggression, slander, and even killings.

OUR AMBITION

Our long-term ambition is to create a healthy civic environment that stops violations of the rights of people and nature. We will ensure the implementation of existing rules and regulations and enable vital conditions for civil society to secure environmental justice.

Intended outcomes by 2024

- **5a.** Local communities and economic actors resolve their competing claims on land, maintaining the integrity of key natural and wilderness areas.
- **5b.** States and society protect environmental defenders and celebrate their work; other actors respect their rights.
- **5c.** Civil society and local actors are empowered to secure a healthy operational space.
- **5d.** Civil society actors influence the development of jurisprudence on the enforcement of existing laws and regulations protecting rights for nature.
- **5e.** Governmental and international authorities combat and prevent environmental crimes, specifically wildlife crimes and other transgressions of environmental laws and policies.

OUR APPROACH

IUCN NL is the only conservation organisation part of the international alliances working on the topic of nature and human rights. Through our role as incubator and resource broker, we provide resources for environmental defenders and facilitate access to international platforms. We support independent data gathering and the development of monitoring and control systems against environmental crime.

Working in an inclusive and socially fair way, we are committed to the Conservation Initiative on Human Rights and look into the intersectionality of women and indigenous people defenders in key landscapes. We strengthen traditional conservation efforts by creating and supporting jurisprudence for the implementation of rights for nature and strengthen law enforcement towards disrupting organised crime networks engaged in wildlife trade and other environmental crimes.

6. Secure large-scale finance for conservation and restoration

Goal: Private and public finance is redirected to scalable ecosystem restoration and conservation programs.



CONTEXT

Worldwide, large funds for land and landscape restoration are available. However, they do not prioritise the conservation of biodiversity-rich areas nor the restoration of natural ecosystems. At the same time, traditional funding sources, such as

official development assistance, are decreasing and remain insufficient to maintain ecosystem health. Private investors can potentially cover these gaps, but conservation finance remains an undeveloped investment area for the private sector.

A core reason behind this is the underlying lack of capacity to develop scalable projects with environmental, social, and financial returns on investment. This is relevant for community organisations, civil society organisations, governments, and companies and financial institutions. As a result of barriers to adequate finance, conservation and restoration initiatives remain small in scale and fail to reach their full potential.

OUR AMBITION

Our long-term ambition is to redirect private and public finance to scalable ecosystem restoration and conservation programs. We will develop models to channel private and public funds to finance upscale ecosystem conservation activities facilitating for investors to contribute to conservation goals. These models will be based on suitable, exemplary business cases in the landscapes where we work with our partners. We will prioritise the funding of corridors and buffers in landscapes, using Key Biodiversity Areas as main guide.

Intended outcomes by 2024

- **6a.** Community organisations, civil society, government, companies, and financial institutions co-develop an effective governance system to secure a pre-investment enabling environment.
- **6b.** These actors develop models to attract public and private finance for suitable business cases in restoration and conservation.
- **6c.** In partnerships, these actors close deals with new types of investors for initial funding of these models.

- **6d.** The successful partnerships secure funding to scale up their business cases to deliver ecological returns.

OUR APPROACH

Achieving these goals requires changes in existing policies and practices, designing new financial models and integrated approaches to attract mainstream funding, enabling scaling up and replication of such interventions. Hence, we deliver on our role as incubator, as this will improve access to new finance and re-direct existing finance toward the landscapes. We act as a resource broker in order to improve local capacity, both in terms of finance and expertise.

Our actions are to convene actors in the landscape with local, national and international investors to initiate multi-stakeholder dialogues, necessary to create the right environment for conservation investments. We build capacity for actors in the landscape, in particular members of local communities, women and youth, to develop and set up business cases. We apply science- and evidence-based approaches to develop programs that can achieve net-positive impact on biodiversity. This includes the development of innovative monitoring systems to link progress in conservation and restoration indicators to track and inform investment performance of private actors, and policy progress of public actors.



**IUCN NL (IUCN National
Committee of The Netherlands)**

Plantage Middenlaan 2K

1018 DD Amsterdam

T + 31 (0) 20 626 17 32

mail@iucn.nl

www.iucn.nl

