UNFCCC COP28 – ZSL Position Statement

This paper outlines ZSL's key policy recommendations for three negotiation areas where there are crucial opportunities for integrating biodiversity – The Global Stock Take (GST), The Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), and Loss and Damage (L&D).

Key Policy Asks

The Global Stock Take - GST

- Use the results of the first GST to assess collective progress in the implementation of ecosystem-based provisions of the Paris Agreement and send a clear signal that without urgent action to protect and restore biodiversity countries will not be able to meet their climate goals.
- Identify opportunities for enhanced alignment of actions to achieve the Paris Agreement and Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), in particular the integration of biodiversity into updated national climate plans and the delivery of financial commitments.

The Global Goal on Adaptation – GGA

- The Global Goal on Adaptation must incorporate nature into its text and targets, with dedicated targets for Ecosystem-based adaptation and resilience building, alongside a dedicated adaptation financing mechanism and monitoring and evaluation Framework.

Loss and Damage – L&D

- The Loss and Damage fund should consider complimentary financing for nature in light of the multiple co-benefits biodiversity can enable across climate resilience, adaptation, mitigation and livelihood creation.

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IP&LCs)

- Across the GST, GGA and Loss and Damage, the rights, roles and vital contributions of IP&LCs should be upheld, with direct steps taken to ensure meaningful multistakeholder engagement and access at all levels in the development and delivery of policy.

Nature Positive Decision Making in the UNFCCC

Meeting global climate commitments can only be realistically achieved by meeting global commitments to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, alongside urgent action to rapidly phase out fossil fuels. Protecting and restoring natural ecosystems, such as forests, woodlands and savannahs could store a quarter of the Carbon needed to limit warming to 1.5 °C. Nature will also play a crucial role in supporting communities most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and most in need of urgent help. Despite the multiple co-benefits, actions to address the climate crisis often fail to prioritise or even consider biodiversity impacts.

As an international conservation organisation with extensive expertise, ZSL's engagement with the UNFCCC is focused on bridging biodiversity and climate solutions by advocating for nature's integral role as a key tool for mitigation, adaptation, and building resilience. ZSL is also demonstrating policy into practice through innovative research and delivery of conservation projects worldwide, spanning mangroves, sea-grass, sustainable resource management and more. We are working to ensure that biodiversity recovery remains central to climate response strategies at all levels, from local to global; so that nature is put at the heart of global decision making.

> *"Protecting ecosystems such tropical forests and mangroves, restoration and rewilding projects, as well as the greening up of urban areas are examples of NbS [Nature based Solutions] that can help improve carbon sequestration capacity while helping us adapt to the new climate normal."*
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> ZSL, Time to Integrate Global Climate Change and Biodiversity Science Policy Agenda, 2021

The Global Stock Take – GST

The Global Stocktake (GST) is a 5-yearly process to assess global collective progress towards achieving the Paris Agreement goals. COP28 is the first GST and an opportunity for 'global reset and course correct'. The GST will assess progress, identify gaps and inform future action but the role of biodiversity and Nature-based-Solutions has been broadly absent from these discussions. The response from the results of the GST – both political and practical – will be a central outcome of COP28. The GST should therefore provide an actionable way forward for parties and work to strengthen mechanism, rules, definitions, and frameworks that provides incentives and tools for the mobilisation of ecosystem-based approaches as laid out in Article 5 and the preamble of the Paris Agreement.

Recommendations for the GST

- Nature is central to national climate plans and implementation – the GST should identify opportunities and commit to better align planning and delivery of the Paris Agreement and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), in particular through Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP). It should give guidance and instruction to parties on the better integrate biodiversity protection and restoration into revised national plans (expected at COP30).
- Operationalising Article 5 – The response to the GST should include plans to fully mobilise Article 5 of the Paris agreement in a manner that does not limit it to forest focused initiatives (e.g. REDD+), and fully embraces actions that span all ecosystems and bolsters ecosystem integrity.
- Definitions – The current definition of "forests" within the UNFCCC fails to differentiate between biodiversity-rich stable ecosystems and heavily degraded or plantation forests. This risks the creation of economic incentives towards the possible degradation and conversion of high integrity and biodiversity rich forestry. A clearer definition that prioritises the protection and restoration of biodiversity rich landscapes should be strived for.
- Mobilising adaptation and mitigation action - The GST must recognise the critical role that ecosystem-based approaches can and should play in mobilising both adaptation and mitigation action.

"The climate change and biodiversity loss crises that underpin the breaking down of our environment are fundamentally connected. Interconnectedness between these two crises should not be underestimated: this is not just about climate change impacting biodiversity; it is also about the loss of biodiversity deepening the climate crisis. Reduced species abundance, local extinctions, as well as the rapid degradation and/or loss of ecosystems such as mangroves, tropical forests, peatlands, and seagrass are indeed having a major impact on our planet's ability to store carbon, while reducing nature and people's ability to adapt to and/or cope with changing climatic conditions." - Dr Nathalie Pettorelli – Professor, The Zoological Society of

The Global Goal on Adaptation - GGA

It is critical to recognise that many parts of the world are already feeling significant impacts of Climate Change, and the GGA will elevate the importance of adaptation to the same level as mitigation within the Paris Agreement. The GGA process will set out global goals and targets for adaptation and resilience building and nature can have a significant role in both implementation and the measurement of success. The GGA's targets and goals alongside a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework are expected to be negotiated at COP28. GGA metrics should include specific goals and targets for ecosystem-based adaptation and resilience building, alongside livelihood creation and community engagement.

Policy Recommendations for the GGA

- Integrating and mainstreaming Biodiversity - The GGA should recognise and integrate the role of Nature based Solutions (NbS) and Ecosystem based Adaptation (EbA) approaches in the GGA text, targets, and monitoring framework, as a vital tool in building climate resilience while enabling a variety of co-benefits such as reducing vulnerability to climate hazards, improving water security, enhancing food security, and supporting biodiversity.
- Targets and Goals for Ecosystem-Based Adaptation – Within the GGA's goals and targes should sit specific targets for the role of ecosystem-based adaptation solutions and the role such solutions can play in safeguarding ecosystems and livelihoods alike. All goals and targets should be comprehensive and ambitious, with clear language to ensure the GGA text is robust and able to drive meaningful action.
- Targets and Goals for Ecosystem Resilience – The GGA's targets must champion actions that enable and strengthen ecosystem resilience, such as sustainable natural resource management across water, agriculture, timber and more.

- Dedicated Adaptation finance – The UNEP Nov 2022 Adaptation Gap Report estimates the annual cost of adaptation for developing countries alone will be between $160-340 billion by 2030. The GGA should include a dedicated global target for adaptation financing to help close this fap that includes funding mechanisms to support countries and communities in the protection and restoration of biodiversity and the co-benefits it enables for local communities. NbS adaptation and resilience building approaches should be funded through dedicated adaptation financing across public and private sector mechanisms.
- A strong Monitoring and Evaluation and Learning Framework (M&E) – The GGA will require a dedicated M&E framework to assess implementation of the GGA's goals and targets in the short and long term – with a standardised reporting system for all parties that takes place every 2 years. Targets, indicators, and technical matters should align and bridge with existing frameworks – such as the SDG's, the KM-GBF and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction – to enable synergies, minimize reporting burden, limit the risk of double counting and to help mainstream adaptation planning, implementation and monitoring at all levels.

Nature based adaptation action example – Mangroves

Nature can, and should, be understood as a vital tool in the task of combatting climate change, not only in its capacity as a carbon store, but also as a mechanism for increasing resilience and adaptation across environments to protect humans, their communities, and livelihoods. Natural high-integrity ecosystems are also vital to adapt to climate impacts and build resilience, including by reducing risks from floods and droughts. Mangroves shield inland habitats and communities from storm and capture and store more carbon for their size and terrestrial rainforests. ZSL has engaged in community-based mangrove rehabilitation since 2007, regenerating over 100ha and training over 1000 people in mangrove rehabilitation.

> *"Not all forests are created equal…Coastal mangroves are far superior to tropical rainforests in terms of capturing carbon, thanks to their peaty soils. And they also offer protection from the increasingly intense tropical storms that we can expect as a result of climate change"*
>
> Dr Jurgenne Primavera. Chief Mangrove Scientific Advisor of the Zoological Society of London

Loss and Damage

Background:

Loss and Damage (L&D) refers to the adverse effects of climate change that mitigation or adaptation efforts have been unable to prevent or reduce. It encompasses both economic and non-economic repercussions, such as the harm to ecosystems, public health, livelihoods, and communities already occurring globally. The agreement of the Loss and Damage fund was a landmark political moment at COP27. COP28 will continue discussion on the fund, the financing mechanisms, governance, implementation and how the fund will be accessed. For nature these discussions could be significant, particularly the discussions on financing for "non-economic losses" and "slow onset losses" both of which can apply to biodiversity. Considering the myriad benefits that nature provides, including bolstering resilience against future climate impacts, facilitating carbon capture, alongside enabling livelihoods and economic development, it is vital that role of biodiversity and nature is recognised within L&D financing.

Policy Recommendations for The Loss and Damage Fund

We call on member states to recognise the scale of damage currently taking place across ecosystems and communities worldwide and establish non-economic losses and slow onset losses as a priority area for loss and damage financing.

- Technical expert group on biodiversity and L&D – creation of a technical group on the intersections between L&D and biodiversity to provide insight to the scale of slow onset biodiversity loss and what evidence informed responses look like. Developing and implementing guidance on the integration of nature-based solutions into L&D prevention, response and recovery measures, alongside capacity building.
- Dedicated funding for nature within the L&D fund - Provide funding for ecosystem-based adaptation and disaster risk reduction through a dedicated funding window for nature and biodiversity within the L&D Fund, supporting the implementation or ecosystem-based approaches across adaptation and mitigation and in turn enabling a range of co-benefits for biodiversity and decreasing vulnerability for local communities.
- Cross treaty alignment – Integrated tools for alignment across other relevant treaties and funding mechanism (e.g., GBF) and systems within the UNFCCC, e.g. the GGA.