

# IUCN's views on the Zero Draft of the outcome document for the UN Summit to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda (June 2015)

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IUCN welcomes the Zero Draft of the outcome document for the UN Summit to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda released on 2 June 2015 and recognises the long path traversed and achievements since the Rio+20 conference in 2012. Indeed, the current outcome document is the result of intensive work undertaken by negotiators, the UN secretariat and stakeholders and there is much to feel proud of.

At this stage of the process, IUCN is very much looking to **maintaining the level of integration** achieved in the SDGs and targets all throughout the different tracks of discussion. It is in this light that the Union provides hereby its comments on the circulated zero draft.

The following are the highlights of each of the elements:

**Declaration:** while the declaration contains the main elements, it still needs much strengthening, particularly in the articulation of the interconnectedness between humanity and nature and the role of nature to ensure the achievement of sustainable development. Specific text is provided in track changes directly in the Zero Draft document (annexed to this paper) as well as highlighted in the present document.

- I- The SDGs and targets:** IUCN encourages countries to keep them as they are with the level of integration already reflected and that only the numerical gaps (x and y) are filled.
- II- Place holder for outcome of the Financing for Development conference:** IUCN hopes that coherence between the Means of Implementation and the outcome of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference on financing for development will be attained.
- III- Follow up and Review:** IUCN welcomes the progress made on this issue and looks forward to further contributing to the design of the mechanism. IUCN endorses the principled presented but considers that some of the language could be tightened in order to reflect more commitment.

**Annex I (proposed target revisions):** as mentioned above, IUCN wishes that the revision allows for filling in the numerical gaps and/or to harmonise the targets with other commitments already agreed to by the international community. The present document presents language on those targets of particular interest to IUCN.

IUCN has no comments at this stage on Annexes 2 and 3.

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## General views

IUCN strongly welcomes the set of SDGs and targets in the package which has been the result of much discussions and efforts since the beginning of the discussions. The different parts of the document express the importance of integration of all the dimensions of sustainable development. Of particular importance is paragraph 2 of the introduction of the SDGs and targets which underlines the nature of the framework as being “integrated and indivisible”, “global” and “universal.”

There are several elements contained in the Declaration that merit commending. Firstly, it recognises the importance of the international body on Human Rights as well as the sustainable development principles embedded in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. In addition, IUCN commends the reference to the agenda as being universal, integrative and indivisible which is also contained in paragraph 14 of the declaration, but stresses that these underlying principles need to be explicitly articulated throughout the document. Also, IUCN welcomes the level of aspiration of some paragraphs, including the reference to this document as the “charter for people and planet in the twenty-first century” (paragraph 41), which could become the overarching title of the document.

The language of the Declaration as well as some elements of the Follow-up and Review mechanism could benefit from enhancements, especially in regards to reflecting the level of integration mentioned above. The Declaration, in particular, is drafted in a manner, where nature remains quite separate from the equation of development; despite the acknowledgement of the need for integration in the text. Currently, the existing interlinkages are not sufficiently enunciated in the text. Consequently, the linkages of the SDGs and targets are not properly justified by the Declaration as it stands. Specific text on the declaration and other elements are presented below and in the Zero Draft document itself with track-changes as attached.

## Concrete text proposals

### Declaration

The objective of the declaration should be a) to express the level of commitment and aspiration that governments are placing on the whole post-2015 development agenda; b) to portray the rationale behind the SDGs framework and accompanying elements; and c) to recall the fundamental principles upon which the frameworks is built and should be implemented.

- a) Level of commitment and aspiration that governments are placing on the whole post-2015 development agenda: the tone of the text should express a high level of commitment. For example, in paragraph 2, there should be a bold statement that “the achievement of these goals will transform for the better the world in which we all live”. Equally, in paragraph 4, it is more appropriate to replace “wish to see” by “We commit to achieve”. (see track-changes in the attached Annex)
- b) Rationale behind the SDGs framework and accompanying elements: although there is explicit reference to the need of integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development, the text of the Declaration falls back into reflecting different development-related issues in a disconnected manner, like the MDGs framework. It is important that, in addition to expressing the level of ambition, the Declaration also explicitly underlines the interconnectedness of all the issues included in the framework to demonstrate its “indivisibility”, as expressed in paragraph 14. The changes suggested in the attached document intend to provide explicit language to express that nature degradation leads to more poverty, food-water-energy insecurity, inequality and conflict. And vice-versa, protecting nature is protecting the infrastructure that provides for water, food, energy, equality, peace. While this is to a certain level clear in the SDGs and targets themselves, it is not well articulated in the text of the Declaration. IUCN therefore proposes the attached changes to the text of the declaration.
- c) Fundamental principles upon which the framework is built and should be implemented: the Millennium Declaration adopted in 2000, started by “Values and Principles”. IUCN believes that the values and principles of this framework should be included, such as those proposed by the UN

Secretary General in his Synthesis report launched in late 2014 as essential elements for delivering on the SDGs:

**Dignity:** to end poverty and fight inequalities

**People:** to ensure healthy lives, knowledge and the inclusion of women and children

**Prosperity:** to grow a strong, inclusive and transformative economy

**Planet:** to protect our planet for all societies and our children

**Justice:** to promote safe and peaceful societies, and strong institutions

**Partnership:** to catalyse global solidarity for sustainable development

These could be included in the Preamble replacing the list of goals set out in its second paragraph. As it stands, the list presented may be misleading as portraying prevalence of one issue over another, whereas the six essential elements are more like principles that underpin the entire post-2015 development agenda.

IUCN is presenting some **specific text suggestions on the Declaration in track changed form in the document attached**. For the other parts of the zero draft documents, suggestions are proposed below.

### **Follow Up and Review**

IUCN attaches great importance to the Follow up and Review mechanism as, according to vast literature, one of the main reasons for shortcomings in achieving sustainable development over the past decades has been the lack of rigorous accountability mechanisms. In addition, evaluation of the challenges in achieving the MDGs point at the lack of reporting by countries. In light of this, while IUCN believes that this mechanism should be state-led (see [IUCN's Position paper on follow-up and review](#)), it proposes to replace language referring to “voluntary” mechanism by language that reflects that **States will endeavour to make every effort to report on progress to achieve the SDGs and targets as per the established mechanism**. In light of this, the following changes are suggested:

- Paragraph 2  
| “All member states will *endeavor to make every effort to actively participate* ~~engage voluntarily~~ in review processes, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities.”
- Paragraph 5  
| “Each member state ~~could~~ **will**, at least once every four years, conduct robust and inclusive reviews of progress based on a publicly available government progress report and complemented by contributions from civil society, academia, local government, the UN system, private sector and other actors...”
- Paragraph 9  
| “We reaffirm that the HLPF, under the auspices of ECOSOC, shall carry out regular reviews of progress in line with Resolution 67/290. Reviews ~~will be voluntary, while~~ **shall** ~~encouraging~~ reporting, and include developed and developing countries as well as relevant UN entities. ...”

The purpose of reinforcing states’ participation in the follow up and review mechanism is not to “name and shame” those countries not reflecting progress, but rather to identify achievements and challenges to mobilize further action.

With regards to ensuring integration also at the follow-up and review level, IUCN is concerned that the proposal for thematic reporting may create the silos that are trying to be avoided in this new framework. Every effort should be made to ensure that those reporting on the different issues (goals and targets) work in cooperation with those actors from other areas that are intimately related. One way to address this (and taking into account that there are many issues to report on) is to create a system of rotating clusters of issues/goals. IUCN is analysing options for such a system together with other partners.

## SDGs

IUCN proposes to amend a couple of the introductory paragraphs to the SDGs, in particular, paragraph 5 which seems to exacerbate the fragmented nature of international policy by making reference to “independent mandates” among other. It is therefore amend as follows:

- Merge para 4 and 5

*“It is important to recognize the link between ~~sustainable development~~the post-2015 development agenda and other relevant ongoing processes. We resolve to promote universal and holistic coherence among international commitments for sustainable development. This agenda and other international processes should be mutually reinforcing. ~~such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought particularly in Africa, the third Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and the United Nations Forum on Forests.~~*

*We encourage ongoing efforts by states in other fora to address key issues which pose potential challenges to the implementation of our Agenda; and we respect the independent mandates of those processes. We intend that the Agenda and its implementation would support, and be without prejudice to, those other processes and the decisions taken therein.”*

### Annex 1: Proposed Target revisions

IUCN welcomes that the SDGs were included in their entirety and urges States to integrate any eventual revisions as soon as possible. IUCN believes that any such revision should be done solely to add more precision to those targets that are currently containing a placeholder instead of a measurable value and/or to harmonise the targets with other commitments already agreed to by the international community, ensuring that these commitments do not lower the standards of previously agreed ones.

#### X’s, numerical values, specificity

- Target 15.2

*“By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, and by 2030, halt deforestation, and restore degraded forests, ~~and substantially~~ increase afforestation and increase reforestation by 350 million hectares globally”*

This is a figure taken from the New York Declaration on Forests of last year that has a 2030 timeline and provides for an achievable and clear target, which is more measurable than the proposed reference to “substantially”.

#### Consistency with international agreements

- Target 15.1

*“Ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services by 2020, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements, ~~and take further action as needed by 2030~~ with increased efforts until 2030.”*

This is to ensure consistency with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and continued action beyond 2020.

- Target 15.5

*“Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation and fragmentation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species, ~~and take further action as needed by 2030~~ with increased efforts until 2030.”*

This is to ensure consistency with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and continued action beyond 2020.

Please refer to IUCN’s website for all previous position papers on the SDGs: [www.iucn.org/SDGs](http://www.iucn.org/SDGs)