



Australian Government Response – UNEP Global Consultations on Nature Based Solutions

Australia presents its compliments to the United Nations Environment Programme and thanks them for their efforts in progressing UNEA Resolution UNEP/EA.5/Res.5: *Nature Based Solutions for Supporting Sustainable Development*. Australia has provided written input on the following issues:

1. The overall aim of the intergovernmental consultations, and
2. The three specific tasks for the consultations specified in the resolution.

The overall aim of the intergovernmental consultations

Australia strongly supports the intergovernmental consultations on nature-based solutions (NbS). Australia believes the structure of the consultations – a mixture of global and regional consultations will build our collective understanding of NbS among member-states, whilst also focussing on regional approaches to NbS which will vary based on local circumstances.

Australia notes that a hybrid mode of participation allows a greater number of technical experts to participate at appropriate points during the consultation, and hopes that the Secretariat will consider making the regional and global consultations due to take place on 9-13 October 2023 in hybrid format as well.

Australia notes the importance of nature-based solutions as a tool to address a range of environmental and social issues including reducing poverty through biodiversity loss and climate change. Nature-based solutions leverage private finance to provide alternate income streams for communities, and enables participation from women, socially disadvantaged groups and Indigenous peoples. Therefore, it is vitally importance that UNEP, which plays a key normative role in setting the global environment agenda, thoroughly considers the issue of NbS through a comprehensive consultation.

The three specific tasks for the consultation specified in the resolution

a) Compile examples of best practice in nature-based solutions, based on the best available science;

Australia strongly supports this task, as best practice examples of NbS will assist with the development of a shared understanding of what NbS is amongst Member States (more on this below).

Tangible examples of NbS, including how they differ from different types of solutions (such as ecosystem-based adaptation, ocean-based solutions, Nature-inspired solutions or Nature-derived solutions) are important to solidify the proposed outcomes of the resolution, ensure NbS achieves environmental outcomes, and take this work forward. Australia would like to help UNEP with this work and can provide tangible examples of NbS based on the best available science to assist with completing this task.

(b) Assess existing and discuss potential new proposals, criteria, standards and guidelines to address divergences, with a view to achieving a common understanding among Member States for the implementation of nature-based solutions, including to support Member States in designing, implementing and evaluating nature-based solutions, building on existing work,

initiatives and platforms, as appropriate, and without prejudice to existing efforts and initiatives of and new proposals from individual Member States;

NbS are being increasingly recognised in international fora as a tool that can help to address global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, water and food security, human health, disaster risk reduction, among others, and promote sustainable livelihoods. By adopting UNEA Resolution 5/5, all 193 Member States agreed to a definition of NbS, which will greatly assist in building the common understanding of NbS outlined in the task.

A key component of this task is knowledge sharing and capacity building by Member States in order to ensure that implementation of NbS policies and programs are aligned with the agreed definition. Australia is currently undertaking capacity-building projects of this nature and is able to share best practices during the consultations. This includes:

- The Indo-Pacific Offsets Scheme, which includes development style projects including technical capacity-building support for carbon market regulatory, legislative and institutional infrastructure across partner countries in the Pacific and Southeast Asia. Projects that can be considered include NbS.
- The Blue Carbon Conservation and Restoration Accounting Program, which provides support for on-the-ground projects in Australia and overseas to restore, conserve and account for coastal blue carbon ecosystems, and help pave the way for private finance.
- Australia's International Partnership for Blue Carbon – a global network of over 50 partners that provides an open forum for partners to connect, share and collaborate to build solutions, take action, and benefit from the experience and expertise of the global community.
- The Pacific Blue Carbon Program (Australian Dollars (AUD)\$6.3 million, 2018 – 24) builds capacity to protect and restore blue carbon ecosystems in Fiji and PNG to measure, report and verify carbon in mangroves and seagrasses to incorporate this information in countries' greenhouse gas accounts, and climate and related policies.
- ReefCloud (AUD\$6.6 million, 2023 – 25) utilises artificial intelligence systems to allow local communities and Indigenous ranger groups to collect data on their reefs, to support governments to undertake management planning, including for high value ecosystems and species.
- Investing in the multi-donor, French-led Kiwa Initiative, which provides nature-based solutions financing for Pacific governments, civil society and regional organisations (AUD\$1 million).
- Investing AUD\$10 million in the UNDP's Community-Based Adaptation program, to develop projects that conserve and restore the environment while enhancing livelihoods and well-being.

*(c) Identify options for supporting **sustainable investment in nature-based solutions** and share information on bilateral and multilateral sources of finance to enable developing countries to develop and deploy nature-based solutions;*

Awareness of the economic benefit that can flow from protecting and restoring our natural capital is increasing, as over half of the world's GDP depends on natural capital and its services. Natural capital is key to the success of many Australian industries including agriculture, fishing and forestry, tourism and resource sectors.

Australia is undertaking work to support sustainable investment in nature-based solutions in several ways, including:

- Australia's membership of the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures Stewardship Council is seeking to increase private investment in natural capital and drive demand for NbS by helping embed natural capital considerations in commercial and financial decision-making.
- As part of our role on the UNFCCC Standing Committee on Finance, Australia co-led the organisation of a 'finance for nature-based solutions' forum in September 2022 – with outcomes feeding directly into COP27.
- Australia's investment in the Tropical Asia Forestry Fund 2 will help catalyse US\$300 million in new investment and bring over 10,000 Ha of Southeast Asia forestry plantations under sustainable management practices.
- Climate Resilient by Nature (AUD\$14.5 million) and the Blue Carbon Accelerator Fund (\$AUD7.25 million) is supporting developing country partners to implement nature-based solutions activities in high value carbon ecosystems, and access private sector finance opportunities – including through carbon markets. Climate Resilient by Nature brings together Traditional Knowledge and science to restore and protect critical ecosystems, working with Australian NGOs, local communities and Indigenous organisations.

Thank you again for your efforts in conducting these global consultations.