



**Statement by Inger Andersen, Director General,
International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
High Level Segment of UNFCCC COP23/ CMP13/ CMA1.2
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Mr. President,

Bula Vinaka

Let me begin by congratulating the Government of Fiji for its leadership at this COP.

We stand today at an important half-way mark, the mid-point between the Paris Agreement and the deadline Parties set themselves to begin implementing it. And so realising our ambitions will require pulling out every stop, deploying every tool available to us.

This is why IUCN is relentless in championing a great and yet often underestimated ally in the effort to achieve the Paris Agreement: I am of course referring to mother nature.

Recent analysis indicates that natural climate solutions can provide over one-third of the climate mitigation needed between now and 2030 to stabilize warming to below 2°C. That's huge.

But, as IUCN's work around the globe shows, nature-based solutions go well beyond mitigating climate change. In a world where the devastating consequences of climate change are already upon us, investments in nature's infrastructure – the floodplains, mangroves, estuaries – help protect communities from climate-related disasters. A recent study, for instance, estimates that wetlands avoided US\$ 625 million in direct flood damages during Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

And beyond their crucial role in tackling climate change, nature-based solutions help reduce poverty and feed a growing global population while also conserving biodiversity. We must therefore ask ourselves, can we afford to overlook this powerful ally?

This is why IUCN encourages Parties to include ambitious nature-based solutions to climate change – such as forest landscape restoration – in the preparation and revision of their Nationally Determined Contributions.

We live in a world that has set ambitious goals for itself. We have come together with a shared vision of a healthy planet, populated by healthy, prosperous people who care about their shared responsibility to preserve this one common home.

With nature, we can get there, without her, we will surely fail.

We need to look after nature better so that nature can better look after us. IUCN's latest World Heritage Outlook report, which we released at this COP, shows that the number of natural World Heritage sites being affected by climate change has nearly doubled over the last 3 years.

This is yet another signal why we need ambitious and early mitigation action across all sectors today, and why we cannot afford to stall any longer. While nature can play its part, we humans need to do so too.

We would also like to welcome the highlighting of the Ocean – something that is all too often neglected – at this COP, and the launch of the Ocean Pathway under the leadership of the Fijian Presidency.

Equally important is the substantive climate action agenda that was advanced in the Bonn Zone under the Marrakech Partnership on Global Climate Action.

IUCN was honoured to contribute to this process, particularly on the thematic tracks of forests, water, oceans and resilience. We would like to see its outcomes strongly inform the decisions taken by countries in their efforts to address climate change, including through the Talanoa Dialogue process over the coming year.

We also welcome the successful adoption of the Gender Action Plan, and the progress made in operationalising the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples (LCIP) Platform.

These are important accomplishments of COP23.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thanks to your efforts here in Bonn, we can move the climate agenda forward with renewed confidence and belief that the winds of change are firmly at our backs – that our unshakable determination and resolve will steer this precious planet – this 'Drua' – to safer waters.

Allow me to conclude by expressing our thanks and congratulations again to Fiji for a highly successful COP23, and our thanks also to the Government of Germany for hosting us so graciously in Bonn.

Thank you.