

Launch of IUCN Global Standard for Nature based Solutions, 23.07.2020
Speech by Ms. Mito Tsukamoto, Chief, Development and Investment Branch, ILO

Honorable Vice Presidenta, Vice Ministra, Ministers, dear IUCN friends and colleagues,

I am really humbled to have been invited to be part of such a distinguished Panel, so thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

The role of Nature based Solutions (NbS) is relevant to the ILO and the World of Work, and we congratulate the IUCN Team for this guide which will help our practitioners and engineers to be able to better incorporate NbS.

With or without COVID-19, we continue to live in a world that is volatile - with over 2 billion people living in fragile and conflict-affected situations prior to the pandemic.

Inequality is becoming ever more evident; grievances and violence are increasing, with increasing environmental degradation and an accelerating pace of biodiversity loss which affect many, but especially the most vulnerable and the **700 million working poor**.

Ironically, 2020, as we all know, was the year that was set to be the 'Super Year' for Nature and Beyond with a view to mobilizing international actors to **strengthen leadership** and focus on nature in support of the SDGs.

In some ways, the COVID pandemic, impacting some **400 million full time jobs**, has exposed the **systemic nature of risk**, and unfortunately brought to surface **existing inequalities** when it comes to access to health and to **basic social and economic infrastructure and services**.

This has made the **fragile links between nature and sustainable development** more evident, including the impact this has on **livelihoods, employment and income generation**.

Some may argue that growth and development can negatively affect the environment, but we must recall that they also have significant potential to **contribute to the protection, sustainable management and restoration of nature, also addressing a just transition and building resilient ecosystems**.

So how is NbS relevant to ILO's work, and what can help the ILO do better?

The ILO for at least half a century has been promoting employment-intensive investments creating useful and productive jobs based on different types of labour-based activities, using innovative and appropriate technologies, resources and manpower, often addressing existing labour market deficiencies where there are insufficient job opportunities.

Green Works is one such approach, where physical activities for the development and maintenance of **infrastructure, environmental and community assets** can have an overall positive environmental impact, contributing to disaster risk reduction and supporting very much needed livelihoods.

These approaches introduced by the ILO combine and optimize the use of local labour, local materials, local contractors, local authorities and local communities, increasing the overall impact of investments on the local economy while strengthening local and national institutions.

Green works have the **great potential for employment creation** just as they are, since by nature, they are labour-intensive. ILO's experience has shown that **labour intensities in Green Works can be increased with up to 35% when applying employment-intensive approaches.**

Also, Recommendation 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience includes among its guiding principles the importance of using local knowledge, capacity and resources in responding to crisis, with a view to prevention and to promote **jobs for peace and resilience.**

Then, how can NbS add value to decent jobs, local resources and green jobs?

A recent example is a pilot project financed by the ILO, but implemented jointly with the IUCN, where our two agencies joined forces in Sri Lanka, in the construction of a permanent bridge over a stream that ran across the village of Palbima based on a request by local villagers who had been using a temporary foot bridge made out of "Kithul" palm trunks. The villagers were cutting down the equivalent of 15-20 trees ever year in just this one village. With the ILO's support in building this permanent bridge, this not only contributed to halting the felling of this multipurpose tree, it also provided access to job and markets to the local villagers.

So as we reset or restart in this "new normal", we need to remind ourselves that the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 and environmental degradation can be tackled hand in hand, for mutually reinforcing benefits contributing to a more sustainable and job-rich recovery. They can also be designed with gender and equality considerations.

Both the ILO and IUCN, with Member States and a large constituency of partners, are well positioned to encourage policy and decision makers to move **towards more nature-based systems to ensure that sustainable decent jobs are created to build resilience.** Governments, employers' and workers' organizations – have a key role in seizing this opportunity and paving the way to a socially just, but also resilient and green recovery.

Allow me to conclude with three recommendations:

We must continue to build evidence on the economic imperative of how green jobs through green works can create multiple wins to address poverty and inequality while protecting the environment and building climate resilient infrastructure for a healthier planet.

We must build back better so that the new systems created are safer, fairer and more sustainable, building pathways to resilience and sustainable development that leave no one behind.

We must use the **Decent Work Agenda**, the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, together with the **Sendai Framework for DRR**, the **Green New Deals** in many countries, now complemented by the **IUCN Global Standard**, as they together provide a **strong basis for putting people, employment and decent work at the centre of this green and resilient recovery.**