

Full organisation name:

WWF European Policy Office, Conservation International, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Wetlands International European Association, TRAFFIC, Climate Action Network Europe

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This paper lays out the recommendations of **WWF, TRAFFIC, Climate Action Network Europe, Conservation International, International Fund for Animal Welfare and Wetlands International** for the environment, biodiversity and climate regional initiatives in the EU Asia - Pacific regional Multi-annual Indicative Plan (MIP) for the period 2021 - 2027 with the objective to deliver on the ambitions of the European Green Deal in the NDICI - Global Europe.

1. Operationalisation

1.1 How can the EU best operationalise the interaction with CSOs and LAs in the implementation of this regional programme in line with the foreseen regional priorities and Team Europe Initiatives?

Aspects to continue: i) support principles which reinforce CSO roles in climate and environmental action such as the Aarhus Convention; ii) support civil society groups to monitor progress, improve transparency and play an effective watchdog role. CSOs should remain the privileged partner of the EU at the regional level due to their unique position and status allowing them to develop partnerships with private and public actors - including community and indigenous groups - while maintaining political neutrality; iii) offer CSOs a space to engage with and influence the EU as well as for the EU to leverage CSO knowledge, capabilities and their role as advocates for biodiversity protection, fighting poverty and promoting gender equality, inclusion and sustainable development.

Aspects that should change:

i) CSO funding: significant and predictable funding be made available to CSOs, to safeguard civic space and enable CSOs' participation in Green Transition programmes. Many global network NGOs have operational and technical capacity to implement technically demanding multi-country programmes in a cost-effective way, as well as to carry the research; ii) **strengthen EU dialogue with a diverse range of CSOs**, including Indigenous People & Local Community (IPLC) organisations and marginalised groups from grassroots, indigenous, youth and women's groups, climate justice and environmental defenders. The Climate, Land Ambition and Rights Alliance (CLARA) 2018 report, "Missing Pathways to 1.5°C", demonstrated the key role IPLCs play in ecosystem protection and the need to secure their land rights. Attacks on them and other environmental rights defenders are on the rise as pressure on natural resources increases. Protecting and empowering them must be part of the EU's approach; iii) it is imperative to design regional strategies that target CSOs in particular youth, women, and IPLCs, **through education and engagement, to become the agents of change** for an ecological future where nature is seen as an important cornerstone of long-term poverty reduction and economic development.

With a significant **drop in the funding to the EU Thematic Global Challenges programmes** under the current 2021-2027 MFF compared with the previous 2014-2020 period, the EU Asia - Pacific regional programme is critical to achieving commitments made at Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Previously, 27% of GPGC funding targeted the environment, of which 30-38% directly supported protecting, improving and sustainably managing ecosystems through the Biodiversity for Life (B4LIFE) flagship initiative - representing approximately 400M€ over the 2014-2020 period. To materialise the momentum created by integrating the Green Deal throughout Global Europe - NDICI programming and to enable a green and just recovery in Asia - Pacific, the **regional MIP must foresee adequate funding to biodiversity, environment and climate.**

1.2 Can you provide specific examples of existing platforms that could be used for the operationalisation of the collaboration? (please indicate geographical and content coverage of the suggested platforms)

The EU has a clear role to play in enabling the move towards a circular and sustainable economy, by building on and expanding successful regional programmes - such as **Switch Asia** - that support the transformation of our global economies towards absolute decoupling of economic activities from the consumption of limited resources,

thereby promoting society-wide benefits for all within planetary boundaries. **Expanding and strengthening “Switch Asia” programmes while promoting multi-stakeholders approaches:** i) to support companies, particularly Micro, Small and Medium sized Enterprises (MSMEs), develop circular, regenerative business models which create and share value across the economy, support new employment opportunities and reduce poverty. Support the “design out” of waste and pollution, increase utilisation of existing assets (sharing economy) and make decarbonisation a priority; keep materials in use as long as they maintain their quality, and up-cycle materials to optimise the use; design high quality products which can be upgraded and repaired; accelerate circular high positive impact innovations to avoid emissions from resource and energy-intensive sectors; ii) support innovative financial mechanisms and access to finance for MSME, cooperatives and informal workers who often play a lead role in waste prevention and material reuse. Promote multi-stakeholder approaches by designing programmes that bring together companies, investors, civil society organisations, the public sector and other actors to foster regulatory changes, and a more conducive business environment; capacity building and cross-company cooperation for circular economy across supply chains; investments in local supply chains and shorter producers-consumers links important to revitalise rural, decentralized, sustainable & equitable economies while creating green and blue jobs; iii) There is a new consensus on the need for a ‘sustainable food systems approach’, moving away from traditional value-chain approaches. [Investments in agro-ecology and sustainable consumption and production](#) are important to minimise the environmental impact of producing enough food to feed a growing population and regenerate natural resources like soil.

Sustainable Consumption & Production is about addressing interrelated challenges with a more systemic, holistic perspective. Food systems transformation in support of the SDGs requires policies and interventions that promote sustainability along the entire value chain and beyond as these strategies take into account the social (including culture and health), environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development. This means linking areas such as agriculture, nutrition, environment, health, trade, etc., at multiple levels as climate, livelihoods, equity, biodiversity must all be integrated into food systems solutions. Facts, interests and values of different actors need to be carefully balanced, trade-offs identified and managed. Some recommendations: i) Unlocking research, innovation and finance for agroecological approaches, moving away from industrial uniform agriculture models; ii) Leveraging sustainable food public procurement; iii) National governments develop dietary guidelines with sustainability criteria, and coordinate with local level jurisdictions for context-specific adaptation; iv) Using True Cost Accounting methods in the diagnosis of challenges and solutions; v) Businesses create environments that support sustainable dietary patterns, beyond providing sustainable products, promoting and marketing sustainable choices; vi) Food loss and waste: private sector action plans on loss and waste reduction, government legislation supporting loss and waste reduction and ambitious consumer behavior change strategies jointly implemented by private and public actors; vii) Develop value chains and new business models that focus on degraded land systems and soil restoration, and supporting financial mechanisms to fund such approaches.

As water-related disasters are increasing and natural capital is increasingly lost, it is urgent to move from single solution focused traditional hard water and coastal engineering responses such as for flood defence and port development, to inclusive, multi-functional, climate adaptive and sustainable solutions that protect and restore natural river and coastal processes benefiting the economy, society and nature in Asia. **The EU is recommended to make effective use of existing Green and Blue Alliances and Partnerships led by CSOs, but also to support and make use of new regional initiatives and Platforms that are developing, such as Building with Nature Asia (Wetlands International) and Resilient Asian Deltas (WWF)**, which aim for the adoption of Building with Nature as a socially and environmentally inclusive engineering approach,

2. Relevance, gaps and SDGs

2.1 What aspects of the MIP are most relevant and important for your constituents? (please indicate any relevant geographical specificity that should be considered) & 2.2 What is missing in the MIP? (please indicate if this gap responds to a geographical specific context, or if it applies to the wider Asia-Pacific region)

We would like to recommend the following regional initiatives for inclusion in the EU regional MIP:

Biodiversity, wildlife and conservation

The EU has also identified the most important ‘Key Landscapes for Conservation’ in Asia through the very comprehensive ‘**Larger than Tigers**’ document which outlines a strategic approach and identifies priorities for wildlife conservation in Asia. This document provides a basis from which key landscapes and Seascapes can be prioritized for inclusion in a future regional program for protected areas. On top of the support the EU could provide

to individual countries through national MIPs, a focus of the regional program should be on initiatives requiring a transboundary approach such as:

One Health - Averting the Next Pandemic and wildlife trade: to prevent the next zoonotic epidemic or pandemic key points along the trade chains have been identified. It is critical for the EU to support the existing regional actions: Financial support to promote regional cooperation on advancing and standardising wildlife policy; developing risk evaluation tools to assess viral transmission risks in the wildlife trade supply chains; engaging the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) on the origins of COVID-19, the wildlife trade, and how to prevent future pandemics; developing a partnership with the World Organization on Animal Health (OIE) to include wildlife trade and associated disease transmission risk in their sphere of influence. It is also critical for the EU to work with regional stakeholders to reduce wildlife trade and minimize zoonotic risk through customs, law enforcement and wildlife sectors. Further work on advocacy with governments and the Traditional Chinese Medicine sector for policy reform and to close existing loopholes is required. In working together with OIE and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, introduce and institutionalize the OneHealth system in the Asia Pacific region. We also recommend that the EU regional programme prioritise actions addressing the supply and demand of wildlife-based products; in particular it is suggested priority is given to programs that build the political commitment of governments to tackle illegal wildlife trade, which in practice would result in law enforcement and judicial and other regulatory agencies mandated to bring wildlife criminals to justice are fully resourced and provided with sufficient legal mandate.

Closing Asia's ivory markets: The EU should focus on closing existing legal loopholes and address policies that enable purchasing and laundering of ivory from Africa through targeted policy advocacy. Specifically: support the [annual ivory consumption surveys](#), the largest of its kind in the world, towards building capacity around the topic of consumption and demand reduction for wildlife products; leverage the travel and tourism industries as major influencers in [reducing traveller demand for ivory](#) and other wildlife products; improve the capacity of enforcement agencies, including customs, to detect and intercept ivory and other wildlife trafficking.

Regional cooperation, high level political and resource commitment, and building effective cross-sectoral governance mechanisms and capacities are essential for flagship species recovery, maintaining and re-establishing large mammal transboundary movements in South East Asia and establishing a South East Asia regional network of transboundary protected areas that is effectively managed. An example in terms of regional cooperation is the [Tiger recovery programme](#): The tiger is the ultimate indicator for ecosystem health in its habitat. EU regional MIP should include pledges that will be made at the beginning of 2022 during the Global Tiger Summit to: Protect tigers and their prey from poaching; conserve tiger habitats, including core areas, buffer zones and corridors; support human populations living in tiger landscapes; establish self-sufficient projects which are sustainable beyond the lifespan of funding programs; support rewilding or reintroduction programs for tigers; catalyse greater action and investments in tiger conservation thereby generating a broader set of social and economic benefits in line with national and global sustainable development goals. Replicating the successful regional cooperation on tigers model to other areas requires support to the functioning of a regional secretariat to sustain regional cooperation, effectively manage a regional PA network and monitor progress of regional species goals; seed funding to help countries bring in the results-based investment to implement required conservation actions at regional level; finance CSO actions to support government implementation to meet the regional goals; fund alternatives and mitigation measures for infrastructure development that threatens transboundary animal movements and minimize habitat conversion in crucial areas for transboundary movements; finance efforts to map Key Biodiversity Areas, conduct gap analysis, and advocacy for establishing a PA network across the region; finance efforts to restore habitats in PAs and for restoring connectivity; restoring natural habitat and connectivity; establish a corpus fund to support habitat and connectivity restoration in transboundary PAs and regional endangered species breeding and reintroduction efforts.

Forests

The EU Asia - Pacific regional programme should follow through on the commitments laid out in the EC communication on "Stepping up Action to protect and restore the world's forests" by adopting and implementing a comprehensive set of measures and initiatives, including supporting upcoming EU legislation to stop products linked to deforestation and ecosystem conversion from entering the EU market, to reduce the EU footprint on the world's natural ecosystems and to address underlying drivers. As an essential and complementary effort, the Asia-Pacific regional programme should strengthen cooperation with producing countries in Asia and Pacific, and other consumer countries to support them in halting deforestation, forest degradation and conversion or degradation of natural ecosystems and human rights violations.

The proposed "EU Forest Partnerships"¹ negotiated with Asian partner countries should be complemented by regional forest initiatives, especially in key deforestation fronts such the **Greater Mekong Region and Sumatra - Borneo - Papua New Guinea** which experienced the most deforestation and forest degradation from 2004 - 2017². The initiatives should be complementary and supportive of ongoing work in the context of FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreements. They should take a comprehensive approach, tackling threats and key drivers of deforestation and other ecosystem conversion (including grasslands, savannahs, and wetlands), ensuring involvement and respect of IPLCs rights.

The Greater Mekong Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR): home to almost 300million people for whom forests are sources of cash, food and shelter, with deep cultural and religious value. Halting forest loss while meeting the needs of a growing population requires restoration at scale. The Greater Mekong holds enormous potential for restoring degraded forests and reconnecting vital habitats; helping to meet the ambitious targets set out in the Bonn Challenge commitments, and Sustainable Development Goals. The EU should support existing coalitions working on FLR initiatives across the region under the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration and use it to restore connectivity and degraded areas for wildlife and developing nature-based solutions for rural livelihoods as alternatives to further deforestation, forest degradation and conversion. Collaboration is necessary to enable FLR initiatives to reach the scale necessary to transform degraded lands back to more sustainable multi-purpose landscapes that provide products and ecosystem services to humanity whilst conserving biodiversity.

Sustainable Natural Rubber: Rubber plantations are now frequently considered as part of the forest sector but their establishment in Southeast Asia have led to widespread deforestation of natural forests without adequate consideration of the consequences for biodiversity and ecosystem services. Natural rubber production needs to and can move to a more sustainable footing and production can be increased without further deforestation. As with timber, the EU should consider measures to encourage legality and sustainability principles need to be promoted through supply chain due diligence, whilst supporting efforts to enhance the sustainability of existing rubber plantations through the careful restoration /management of high conservation value areas and establishment of new rubber plantations in degraded areas under broader forest landscape restoration programs.

Illegal Timber Trade: Despite improvement of national policies and governance (e.g through the FLEGT process) and improvement of technology and enforcement applications, the status of illegal timber trade and its impact on forests, biodiversity, communities and national economies is still worrying. Within this context, EU regional initiatives should focus on: Establishing an independent monitoring body comprising representatives of the relevant government agencies, CSOs and INGOs with unrestricted access to all logging areas³; use satellite images as additional independent sources of information; Use available technologies to pilot innovative ways to improve enforcement and monitor deforestation and forest degradation at the landscape level; support coordination efforts among regional actors and develop common or complementary deforestation and forest fragmentation monitoring techniques; support development of the forest governance monitoring systems to be accessible to all stakeholders at the landscape, national and regional levels for accessing information and collaborating. The system should build on existing projects and programmes at international level (e.g. Land Portal, Forest Legality Initiative, FLEGT and REDD+ facilities), national level (e.g. national Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) and REDD+ programmes) and landscape level (community forest monitoring); creation of a capacity development programme for news media to report forest governance issues effectively, including coverage of technical issues related to deforestation and forest degradation, as well as initiatives such as VPAs and REDD+; pilot sustainable forest management/FSC in production forests, allowing sustainable logging within authorized borders and supporting FSC Chain of Custody and monitoring of legal trade; support existing regional initiatives such as Forests Forward Programme, which leverages the power, interest, and resources of the private sector, communities and other forest stakeholders to achieve improved and sustainable forest management and the future integrity of forest landscapes from social, environmental and economic perspectives; reassess the IUCN listing of *Dalbergia cochinchinensis* (Siamese Rosewood) for the first time since 1998 in order to reflect the substantial population decline.

Freshwater

As the European Green Deal increases the focus on climate and environment globally, water should be at the heart of the project design. Water can play a central role in climate adaptation for people, economies, and nature when programmes are designed to build water resilience from the basin to the community level. The Asia-Pacific regional programme should support a mainstreaming of adaptation projects linked to freshwater ecosystems that reduce risks of disaster to people and support healthy ecosystems that support healthy societies. There are also important learnings from the EU's transformational Water Framework Directive that can be shared and adapted through the

¹ <https://brussels.wcs.org/Portals/0/Brussels/Briefing%20-%20Forest%20Partnerships.pdf?ver=2020-06-23-121136-807>

² https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/deforestation_fronts_drivers_and_responses_in_a_changing_world_full_report_1.pdf

³ <https://globaltimbertrackingnetwork.org/2017/07/07/africa-independent-forest-monitoring-to-boost-transparency/>

Asia-Pacific Regional Programme, such as the importance of connectivity and ecological flows, water quality, and data quality and monitoring systems for effective management.

Specifically, EU regional initiatives should focus on: **i)** effectively protect free flowing Lower Mekong and surrounding wetlands, stabilizing and increasing populations of freshwater species, and ensuring that freshwater ecosystem services are sustainably used for food and fibre production and to increase non-hydro Renewable Energy in the electricity mix of countries; **ii)** the Ganges & Brahmaputra, Indus, Irrawaddy, Mekong, Pearl and Yangtze deltas are all sinking and shrinking⁴. The EU could foster ambitious and innovative ideas based on a proper understanding of the dynamic equilibrium of rivers and deltas. Healthy rivers can sustain flourishing deltas so that they can continue to sustain growing cities and economies; **iii)** Protect the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) and East-Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF)⁵. Using the flyway's functionality as a framework for ecological planning, the EU should work with partners to facilitate and catalyze a process to identify a flyway-wide suite of important wetlands that: a) sustains migrations by acting as stepping-stone corridors between the breeding and over-wintering grounds; b) protects the breeding and over-wintering sites; c) harbour representative wetland biodiversity; d) are important for climate resilience building and e) provide ecosystem services to local communities and society at large; **iv)** Conserving Himalayan Water Towers by securing a network of high-altitude wetlands which make the region's water, food and climate secure – 'focusing on water system resilience'. **v)** supporting the mainstreaming of the Building with Nature approach in Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, India, the Philippines and China) to integrate Nature-based Solutions in hydraulic engineering. The [Building with Nature Asia initiative](#) builds on 12 years of piloting Building with Nature (Innovation platform EcoShape) and operates through participative processes developing 1) projects for climate resilient landscapes by multi-sectoral consortia in each country, inspiring spin-offs and stimulating bottom up action; and 2) a regional Building with Nature platform in Asia to mobilise public and private actors and support implementation and up-scaling, building momentum for nature-based solutions by building capacity and awareness, facilitating knowledge development and fostering exchange of experience between countries. Supporting and using such new platforms, can help the EU to maximise the impact of priority areas in their bilateral efforts under the Green Deal, ASEAN-EU sub-regional cooperation and the 2030 Biodiversity Strategy and in achieving several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Oceans and blue economy

Sustainable fisheries: Seafood provides a regular source of protein and micronutrients for nine out of ten Pacific households. Habitats supporting coastal fisheries, including coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrasses also support some of the highest marine biodiversity in the world. Threats to fisheries and their supporting habitats are therefore by extension threats to the economic stability, livelihoods, food security, health, cultural continuity, and biodiversity of Pacific Island Countries. The EU should focus on increasing regional fisheries management capacity and a burgeoning community-based management culture to provide a foundation on which to address the drivers of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and overfishing in Pacific Island Countries.

For instance, the expansion of shrimp aquaculture has been one of the main drivers of the loss of mangrove forests worldwide. Consequently, tropical mud coastlines have become vulnerable to severe erosion and catastrophic flooding. The EU could support complementary land-use systems that enable aquaculture practices while protecting ecosystems and enhancing climate resilience. When a wide greenbelt is restored, ponds can be revitalised behind the mangroves, and integrated with [Associated Mangrove Aquaculture Farms](#), piloted in Building with Nature Indonesia project, which enables the restoration of mangrove greenbelts in the estuary along waterways and the protection of adjoining fishponds.

Coral reefs: The EU should scale up support to regional initiatives such as the [Coral reef rescue](#) and the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security (CTI- CFF), where EU support is currently supporting marine protected areas, sustainable fishing and countering IUU fishing, fisheries climate change modelling as well as integrated land-sea management approaches and to develop long-term financing mechanisms.

Community-led coastal conservation: If the world's mangroves, coral reefs and seagrass beds are to continue providing for us, then it is time for us to rethink how we manage them. Coastal communities are likely to be most vulnerable to this loss and concurrently powerful custodians of these resources. EU programmes should empower local people to manage their own resources, as research shows that local management is much more effective. The EU should support projects promoting nature-based solutions for reducing climate risks and enhancing landscape, seascape (coastal zone), and urban resilience. To monitor and access near real-time information on where and what changes there are to mangroves across the world, look for evidence to respond to illegal logging, pinpoint the causes of local mangrove loss and track restoration progress, the EU should refer to the [Global Mangroves Watch](#)

⁴ See WWF initiative [Resilient Asian Deltas](#)

⁵ See WWF initiative [Asian flyways](#)

No plastics in nature: Eight million tons of plastic enters the oceans every year. 26% of this by volume is packaging and 62% of all items collected in coastal clean-up is plastics. Plastic waste is expected to quadruple from 2010 to 2050 and global recycling capacity will only cover one third of the waste produced. Today, 18% of tuna and swordfish and 90% of the world's seabirds have fragments of plastic in their stomach; by 2050 this number may rise to 99% if action is not taken to reduce the flow of plastics into oceans. And there is growing concern around microplastics as they contaminate air, tap and bottled water, food and drinks, including salt, honey and beer. CO2 emissions from plastics production are likely to increase 15 times between 2018 – 2050 and will contribute 15% of the total carbon budget in 2050.

Many organizations have begun the journey towards circular economy solutions as well as working at country / city level to ensure better waste collection and management systems linked to investment, entrepreneurship and employment. From the Indian government banning single use plastic by 2022, Ikea phasing out single use plastics by 2020, to the latest publication of National Geographic. The UNEP is putting its weight behind this issue by writing reports, lobbying governments, and launching the #CleanSeas global campaign in 2017 to 'turn the tide on plastic' by eliminating major sources of marine litter by the year 2022. 30 countries have joined the campaign with pledges and commitment to key targets.

The EU should i) support policy and [city level activities](#) for waste management and ocean cleaning, particularly in Asia where 80% of the leakage to oceans occurs; ii) enable Circular economy models aiming for the 3R solution: Reduce, Re-use, Recycle and new technologies in materials and innovations in business models; iii) [Support awareness raising and citizen action](#)

Climate change & sustainable energy:

Coal phase out: The EU should support partner countries to significantly reduce, and ultimately end public finance for new coal and accelerate the shift towards renewables in Asia. Significantly reducing new coal power in Asia will increase the chances of achieving the 60%-80% coal power reduction globally by 2030, and a complete phase-out by 2050, in line with the IPCC 1.5°C Special Report recommendation. Given health as well as both "down & up-stream" biodiversity impacts, this will also contribute to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDGs 7, 8, 11 and 13. Investing in initiatives such as REPOwer and supporting, a policy shift towards investment in a clean energy transition in coal financing recipient countries such as Indonesia and Vietnam, Asia's largest financial recipients for "new coal", will help prevent carbon lock-in and set an example for other developing and emerging economies facing coal expansion risks.

Support existing regional initiatives and alliances on climate action: The EU can help mobilize climate action among subnational and non-state actors, using its Green Diplomacy channels as well as fostering and supporting "informal" efforts, including the [Alliances for Climate Action \(ACA\)](#) which include local, state and regional governments; companies and investors; academic and cultural institutions; tribal organizations and faith communities; healthcare institutions, and civil society.

Strengthen support for Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) for Climate change and disaster risk reduction: The Asia - Pacific regional programme should support Asia and Pacific partner countries in promoting and co-design NBS for climate with Indigenous peoples and local communities in a way that these are socially, ecologically and economically beneficial to all. Further, it should support partner countries to improve the integration of Nature-Based Solutions into their NDCs and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) in order to obtain updated and complete information on the quantity and quality of their mitigation and adaptation potential. These solutions should be promoted in parallel to and additional to systemic changes in our global energy, urban infrastructure and industrial systems.

Climate mainstreaming across all EU regional programmes: climate mainstreaming needs to be better integrated across all sectors through the Asia - Pacific geographic programmes. This means identifying more programmes and projects where climate and environment can act as a 'principal' or 'significant' objective (using Rio Markers) and through stronger alignment of programmes with strategic climate objectives (decarbonisation and adaptation); and more thorough use of climate-proofing principles and tools. There is significant potential to deliver on climate objectives across transport, infrastructure, digitalisation and private sector development (e.g. urban development encompassing adaptation measures, renewables-based transport systems, digitised smart city infrastructure improving energy efficiency). Delivering on climate also needs to contribute to human development and social inclusion, to improve health, particularly nutrition and the right to food, and public education outcomes; e.g. energy access and electrification of the health sector, programmes preparing the health sector for climate and environmental impacts, etc. Identifying programmes and projects with multiple outcomes will maximise impacts, e.g. water resource management using nature based solutions, which contributes to health and adaptation to build

both community and ecosystem resilience; safeguarding wetland carbon stores in South, South-East and East Asia to contribute to global climate mitigation action – improving [integration in NDCs](#), peatlands and mangroves. Degradation of tropical wet-carbon stores such as peatlands and mangroves accounts for upwards of 5% of global carbon budget. Yet, the wetlands continue to be degraded by large-scale reclamation projects, fuelled by product-chains (such as those linked with aquaculture and palm-oil) which do not factor in the climate impacts of degradation. The EU should support the restoration of drained peatland and degraded mangroves making them effective carbon sinks.

All regional programmes and projects need to be ‘**climate-proof**’: compatible with the Paris Agreement’s goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5°C and to protect and restore ecosystems; support adaptation and are climate-resilient: Programming and evaluation instructions must include an obligation to check project and programming **compatibility with international human rights standards, social safeguards, and criteria excluding fossil fuels and environmentally harmful activities** in line with the NDICI regulation; **Climate and environmental screening** for every project and programme, and the scope of screening improved to ensure compatibility with the Paris Agreement’s 1.5°C goal, that projects and programmes are adaptation-proof, and align with nature protection objectives. Strategic Environmental Assessment need to be used more systematically across programmes, and not just those likely to have significant negative environmental impacts; ensure all **tools deliver a more robust assessment of compatibility with climate mitigation and adaptation objectives**, as early as possible in the project or programme development, and should be governed by assessment of alignment to decarbonisation pathways in line with the Paris Agreement’s 1.5°C goal, and assessment of regional and sectoral vulnerabilities to climate impacts over the whole project / programme lifecycle. The assessment should result in a mitigation and adaptation strategy, with plans and measures to ensure projects and programmes adhere to mitigation and adaptation objectives.

2.2 In which of the EU's areas of work do your CSOs / LAs see the most possibilities to enhance joint action with the EU to meet the SDGs?

Inclusive conservation and equitable partnerships for conservation: Support to conservation, and equitable economic development must be built upon an inclusive approach which encompasses a holistic outlook of working that brings people into each step of the decision-making process and develops solutions that work for all stakeholders of landscapes, seascapes and habitats - recognising the important role that Indigenous People and Local Communities play as nature custodians in safeguarding most of the planet’s remaining biocultural diversity. The EU can play an important role in working with governments, civil society and the private sector to advocate and promote the recognition of those IPLCs to become champions of sustainable, holistic development and equitable conservation.

Mainstreaming and prioritising climate and biodiversity objectives: Climate and biodiversity must be prioritised and mainstreamed throughout regional programmes. Identifying programmes and projects with multiple outcomes and benefits will maximise impacts.

Promote gender equality in green transition: Levelling the playing field between genders has proven beneficial for environmental conservation, sustainability and gender equality. Women’s rights are and should remain a high priority in Green Transition programmes in line with the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) - specifically, **promoting a gender-transformative approach to agriculture and food systems** and **Improving data collection**.

A human rights-based approach to underpin all regional programmes: Strong social and environmental safeguards, along with the “do no harm” principle should apply, to counteract potential adverse human rights impacts on people, as already exemplified by biofuels and commodity imports, which cause deforestation, land and water grabs.

Nature based solutions approaches to reducing climate risks: Biodiversity and climate are interlinked, and need integrated responses. A true opportunity lies in deploying and prioritising nature based solutions to break sectoral silos and leverage impact at scale. Specifically, **Integrating nature based solutions in water and coastal engineering** should be at the heart of adaptation action, as ecosystem degradation in deltas, rivers, lakes and coastlines in Asia is exacerbated by traditional responses to water-mediated risks. Priorities for joint action are the creation of enabling policy and investment environments for integrating NbS in water engineering, capacity building, business case development and scaling up investments for Green Infrastructure including through innovative financing and support for pilot and project development.

Prioritising support to enhancement and implementation of NDCs in regional programmes will achieve better climate and environment outcomes, integrated with SDG plans, National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), DRR strategies, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans where available. The EU should seek synergies between NDC

processes and the FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreements in timber-producing countries and increase financial and political support for the FLEGT Action Plan.