This is a joint initiative between:







CONSERVATION FUTURES

PURPOSE AND DESIGN

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CONTENT

INTRODUCTION	3
WHAT IS CONSERVATION FUTURES	4
IN WHAT WAYS ARE PRESENT APPROACHES TO CONSERVATION INADEQUATE ?	6
HOW DOES CONSERVATION FUTURES PROPOSE TO ADDRESS THIS REALITY?	7
HOW DOES CONSERVATION FUTURES DIFFER FROM OTHER CONSERVATION REFORM INITIATIVES?	9
STAGES IN CONSERVATION FUTURES	10
CONSERVATION FUTURES STYLE	15
THE INITIAL CONSERVATION FUTURES PARTNERSHIP	15
COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH	16

INTRODUCTION

past decades, as our civilisation becomes increasingly urbanised and globalised and the Anthropocene - an increasingly humannatural resources and ecosystem services has out of balance with the natural systems and resources on which our prosperity and prospects between people and our planet is needed. depend. And this exceeding of the limits may be triggering irreversible change; recent news about the massive reduction in flying insect numbers in Europe, for example, suggests we could be on dangerous ground.

The relationship between humanity and naresponse is still far from adequate. It seems ture has undergone profound changes in the highly unlikely that a mere reinforcement and acceleration of present efforts will prove sufficient to secure a healthy future for nature and natural systems. We need to think in terms crafted planet - takes hold. Our demand for of transformation - of positive disruption - to secure a healthy future for nature and people. grown to a point where we are now seriously A deep reframing of the role of conservation in supporting the interdependent relationship

> The adoption of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) enshrines the importance of integrated approaches to sustainability. This agenda with its associated goals and targets - now represents the central framework for the transition to sustainable development, one

We must not only intensify existing efforts and rally support for them, but imagine new ways to take conservation to a pace and scale that ensures lasting success.

> In response, conservation¹ actors worldwide have ramped up their efforts and achieved many successes. Governments and intergovernmental

agencies and processes, civil organisations from the global to the local level, corporations and communities are multiplying their efforts to implement the strategies and realise the goals set for biodiversity conservation. And yet the scale and pace of the Millennium Development Goals.



to which all member States of the UN have publicly committed. We must ensure that the commitments to conservation - explicit or implied - remain front and centre and are not marginalised as they were in the earlier

¹The use of the word "conservation" in this paper refers not to narrow approaches to preservation but to the broader aim of ecosystem

The Paris climate agreement shows that, with sound science, strong mobilisation, and a compelling narrative, it is indeed possible to reach a global agreement on a crucial issue and begin to move towards a genuine global response on a scale and – we hope – at a pace that allows genuinely sustainable solutions to be deployed. The different trajectories followed, respectively, by the climate change and biodiversity communities are worthy of serious reflection, given that both were launched together at the Earth Summit in 1992.

2020 is the next big reckoning point for the SDGs, for climate and for biodiversity. For biodiversity, it marks the end of the period set for the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the convening of major intergovernmental meetings including the CBD COP in Beijing, and the launch of a new framework strategy, goals and targets. Conservation Futures aims to make a major contribution to these.

WHAT IS CONSERVATION FUTURES?

The challenge of achieving a lasting balance between an expanding human population and a shrinking nature is highly complex and multi-faceted, and the response must respect and respond to that complexity. Conservation Futures (often referred to in this paper by the shorthand 'initiative') aims, therefore, not to repeat and duplicate the many existing initiatives in this field, but to explore new and different approaches and perspectives that promise to improve the impact of conservation efforts worldwide. It aims to mobilise new stakeholders around the cause of conservation, to explore new thinking from a wide range of fields relevant to conservation, to identify solutions most amenable to being taken to scale, and to craft a new narrative that stresses not the dimensions of the challenge but instead reflects excitement at the potential solutions within our reach.

The scope of Conservation Futures

is to achieve a clear set of breakthroughs in understanding, setting or reforming the rules of the game by which people interact with nature, the rules that determine how we wish to relate to the living planet that supports us. Those factors that most affect nature currently lie outside the remit of conservation authorities and actors, public and private. They relate instead to economic policy, to finance, to consumption and production, to technology, to governance, and to many other fields of human endeavour. Those fields all offer untapped potential for improving and reinforcing conservation practice just as they all represent an ongoing threat. We need better alignment of our society and our economy with the requirements of a resilient planet, with behaviour that undermines conservation phased out and with conservation operating in a favourable and enabling policy framework.

It is important to stress that, while much of what is proposed under the Conservation Futures framework would be similar to the action required to advance sustainable development, the focus of Conservation Futures is very solidly on the living environment – nature, natural resources and ecosystems. Thus, within each area of inquiry, the findings and insights will always be drawn back to the implications for conservation.

Broadly speaking, three major factors threaten biodiversity – climate change, pollution, and land use change². Action to combat climate change is now well structured and has high-level political support in most countries. Action to combat pollution can in large part be addressed by technological change, shifts in patterns of production and consumption, and social mobilisation. Campaigns like the present one to save our seas from ocean plastics, and strong measures to curb air pollution are examples of political and popular response to the issue. Pollution is a case where more – much more – of the same approaches currently employed could resolve the issue.

The third – land-use change, is far more vexed and lies at the heart of the present conservation challenge. It is the central focus of Conservation Futures.



The mission of Conservation Futures

is, therefore, to reframe our relationship with the living planet of which we are an integral part, and to generate as broad as possible a movement to promote that new relationship. It is to add clear value and new input to the conservation debate, drawing lessons and insights from all relevant walks of life and applying these to the improvement of conservation impact.

Conservation Futures aims to bring about a transformation in conservation by generating a groundswell of innovation in the relationships between conservation practice and the other areas of human endeavour on which conservation success depends. We aim to draw into conservation the best of thinking and practice from the rapidly developing disciplines around technological development, ICT, social media, behavioural science, alternative finance mechanisms, and many others to improve mobilisation around conservation priorities and greatly to expand the stakeholder community demanding and working for conservation.

We aim to generate new ideas for conservation, new energy and a new sense of purpose. We aim to recruit a diverse and distributed support base for conservation, working to a new and broadened agenda. And we aim to trigger a large-scale mobilisation through Conservation Futures to reimagine, rethink and reframe conservation, and to generate the pace and scale needed for conservation success.

Conservation Futures will locate the bulk of its action not in the traditional conservation approaches and communities – biological science, natural resource management, natural capital, etc. – but instead at the meeting point between conservation and other fields with a potential to inform and improve conservation action. It aims to supplement and reinforce conservation efforts, not replace them.

4 - Conservation Futures Conservation Futures - **5**

^{2*}land-use change" is here understood to include change in use patterns of marine and freshwater resources as well.

IN WHAT WAYS ARE PRESENT APPROACHES TO CONSERVATION INADEQUATE?

Human use of the planet's natural resources is locked into a situation of persistent unsustainability. We need to break this pattern and reverse the direction in which we are headed. At present, even the mainstream of the sustainable development movement is poorly attuned to the needs of conservation – indeed, as currently crafted, implementation of several of the SDGs could place additional pressure on nature and natural resources unless the trade-offs are clearly articulated and addressed.

However, conservation worldwide is largely focused on stemming and, if possible, reversing the loss of biodiversity and the erosion of ecosystems and ecosystem services. Action is directed both at immediate conservation action and at the drivers of biodiversity loss and ecosystem impoverishment.

Despite many local successes, the global conservation effort is failing to slow the loss of biodiversity significantly, much less reverse it. Certainly the pace and scale of conservation efforts are inadequate given the dimensions of the problem. Conservation is being tripped up by many factors. These include:

- A narrative based on underlining the dangers of present trends that fails to present viable
 and exciting alternatives. Further, it is a narrative that misses the mark in addressing both
 policy makers and the general public.
- An over-emphasis on the science/research end of the science-policy-politics-action continuum.
- A consequent over-reliance on the biological sciences among conservation professionals, leading to a silo mentality and a limited ability to relate effectively with other skill-sets necessary for conservation success. Too much conservation operates on the false assumption that conservation problems are susceptible to solutions arising from the biological sciences. Simply put, the solutions to conservation problems lie outside the base skills readily available to most conservation actors.
- Significant failure to engage successfully with key communities whose impact on conservation is primordial, e.g. the financial and capital markets, agribusiness concerns, urban planners, etc., in particular in reforming the perverse incentives that reward behaviour incompatible with conservation.
- An over-reliance on national governments and intergovernmental process in securing
 conservation progress and a consequent neglect of other actors and other levels of
 action, with the partial exception of local communities. National governments tend to be
 locked into incumbency models and tied into a path-dependency, especially those in rich
 countries; they follow rather than lead. Further, they are locked into a pace (e.g. the rhythm
 of CBD Conferences of the Parties) that renders adequate progress impossible.
- Inadequate attention to articulating the importance of conservation to the achievement
 of wider societal goals such as health, security and employment.

Given present trends and the dangers they represent, conservation requires a substantial rethinking and redefinition, not simply an acceleration of present approaches. Indeed, it will require a series of transformational changes in the way it is conceived, articulated, planned and implemented. This in turn will require an openness to new approaches, new targets, and new stakeholders, all driven by a substantially different narrative.



HOW DOES CONSERVATION FUTURES PROPOSE TO ADDRESS THIS REALITY?

Conservation Futures proposes to alter business-as-usual which, we are convinced, will not deliver conservation success at the necessary pace and scale. **Conservation success depends on non-linear approaches**. The importance of conservation to the future of humanity requires that we consider approaches that offer the possibility of transformative change. This in turn means a sharp focus on the way in which transformative change takes place in our society – the change models, change processes and the change actors in operation. **It requires remaining open to positive disruption**.

There is no particular merit in Conservation Futures seeking to do better what others are doing already. Instead it should be **characterised by new and substantially different approaches**. It will largely locate its action outside the conservation community, pursuing a dual purpose: first, to recruit a broad constituency of new actors to the conservation cause and, second, to offer new ideas and approaches to the conservation community itself, enabling it to improve its impact.

Following a series of partner meetings and wider consultations, Conservation Futures has identified a starting set of potential activities:

- A systematic scan of promising innovations from a range of fields and disciplines central to conservation but the insights from which are rarely screened for relevance to improving conservation practice. These fields roughly correspond to the 'baskets' to be addressed in the Discovery phase of Conservation Futures (see below). The premise is that a significant number of emerging innovations have relevance to the challenges of conservation and could be applied directly or following suitable adaptation.
- By means of a critical and reflexive process, support the articulation of a new narrative
 for conservation that, against the backdrop of the imminent danger represented by
 current trends, focuses on a strong set of realistic and doable targets that do not depend
 on intergovernmental consensus for their realization and that, taken together, would
 substantially improve conservation impact and success. This will require a solid focus on
 the various models for how successful narratives are formed.
- A strong focus on the change processes and models that can deliver the scale, pace and distribution to result in transformation. This implies that the principal target for Conservation Futures consists of relevant actors from outside the conservation world, and the principal purpose to harness their energy, skills, ideas and experience to the task of

6 - Conservation Futures -**7**

- proving the impact and sustainability of conservation action.
- A particular attention to the scale and targets for conservation intervention. For example, the investment of a unit of currency in action at the national government level is likely to yield considerably fewer returns than the same unit invested in sub-national jurisdictions (states, provinces, municipalities). Similarly, it will probably generate a better return if invested in mobilising citizen action, new economy players (digital millennial activists), working with financial market actors, or with forerunner networks and vision-driven coalitions in influencing government action, though of course the situation is not black and white and both are needed. Nevertheless, Conservation Futures will focus on the new players rather than on the incumbents.

HOW DOES CONSERVATION FUTURES DIFFER FROM OTHER CONSERVATION REFORM **INITIATIVES?** Many share the diagnosis of conservation's present limitations, or the frustration with the slow pace of intergovernmental progress. And the conservation world is rife with initiatives aimed at improving the impact and sustainability of conservation action. How then, does Conservation Futures differ from these? It is not focused on the science/knowledge/data foundation for policy

- where the bulk of conservation reform concentrates; instead it focuses on development of specific and practical options to improve the impact and sustainability of conservation efforts.
- It is not focused on informing the general public of the urgency of the conservation predicament or the consequences of present trends; instead it will articulate a new narrative based on generating excitement around the genuine possibilities for enhanced conservation success.
- It does not repose on the active participation of key conservation players in government or civil society; instead it aims to mobilise behind the cause of conservation a wide range of stakeholders who, today, are mostly unengaged.
- It is solidly focused on innovation, and specifically on identifying new and emerging innovations in a wide range of fields essential to conservation but presently poorly connected to it, with a view to promoting a range that are either readily applicable to improving conservation practice or that could be with minor adaptation.
- It assumes that more of the same will not deliver on conservation's goals at a pace and scale susceptible to reversing current trends. Instead it assumes that radically new and different approaches will be needed, that these will tend to be disruptive and challenge both current assumptions and practice, and that nothing less will deliver the transformations that genuine conservation success requires.
- Long-term it is, unlike most conservation reform movements, aimed at generating a mobilisation which, if successful, will not only redefine how conservation is planned and implemented, but also shift the mind-set on how humanity relates to the planet of which we are a part.



Conservation Futures -9 **8** - Conservation Futures



STAGES IN CONSERVATION FUTURES

1

A design phase from the present through March 2018 will:

- agree the initial scope for Conservation Futures
- identify a range of potential co-convenors from a broad range of stakeholder communities, largely outside the conservation mainstream, agree on both a comprehensive partnership and governance model for the initiative
- develop a robust communications and outreach strategy
- undertake a comprehensive horizon scan and mapping of relevant and related initiatives underway or being planned within conservation, and find the appropriate way to engage with the key players in conservation without compromising the independence of Conservation Futures
- begin to map the new actors, sectors and technologies with which Conservation Futures would wish to engage in the discovery phase
- undertake a focused exercise to identify the change models, change processes and change actors needed to deliver success for Conservation Futures
- refine the work plan, processes and mechanisms for the 'discovery' phase
- · secure the funding necessary to operate Conservation Futures at the required level; and
- establish a light Secretariat.

2

This will be followed by a **discovery phase** in which the links between conservation and other fields are explored in greater depth with a view both to identifying what in those fields might usefully be imported or might inspire improved conservation design and practice, and to understand better how conservation objectives are affected by what is happening in those fields. The rapid development of technology, tech applications, social entrepreneurship and transformative thinking in many other areas is opening vast new perspectives. The most promising will be identified and mapped out in the discovery phase.

In this phase, Conservation Futures will focus on a range of 'baskets' – topical or content areas that appear to hold significant promise of contributing to conservation success through new perspectives, innovative approaches or through adaptation to conservation practice of features or technologies of other fields. The work on these baskets will involve intensive framing and analytics, aiming to generate new content for conservation and making the link between developments in these new areas and the needs for future conservation success. **The intention**

identify and deploy a broad range of specific new ideas and approaches, generated in the 'hothouse' of Conservation Futures and, cumulatively, supporting a mobilisation behind a positive, "can-do" approach to conservation.

The detailed approach to 'discovery' in this phase is a matter to be determined during the design phase. It might be envisaged that a lead partner be designated for each basket, and that this partner would draw together a small team that includes specialised organisations and individuals working in that field. The teams might identify and map key developments and innovations in the topic area, put out calls for input, bring together experts or hold wider conferences. They might wish to establish purpose-built networks and operate targeted communications and outreach activities. Each would likely be backed by one or several researchers and a logistical coordinator.

Finally, in the work towards 2020, we will undertake an options development phase, based on a broad series of stakeholder consultations and an open, participatory process. The stakeholder groups will align to some extent with the baskets, but a deliberate attempt will also be made to ensure that the stakeholders are drawn from the many segments that make up the broad community concerned with conservation. The consultations will be informed by material distilled from the discovery phase and setting out promising areas of endeavour moving forward. The aim is to identify, design and launch an expanding range of co-created initiatives that, cumulatively, will generate the pace and scale needed to reach conservation goals and begin to rebalance the relationship between humanity and the planet. These solutions – and the consultations – must be articulated at a variety of scales – global, national and local and must be aimed at intergovernmental process, national governments, corporations, communities and civil society.

The changes we aim for will be articulated for two time horizons. The first is 2020, in light of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) conference in Beijing, the first progress assessment of SDG implementation and the anticipated biodiversity summit at the UN General Assembly. Conservation Futures is being designed with that horizon in mind. However, we wish to lay out ambitions for 2030 as well, both to offer the basis for a realistic set of longer-term targets, and to provide a framework for the Conservation Futures movement.

10 - Conservation Futures Conservation Futures

AN INITIAL SET OF BASKETS INCLUDES:

to be refined and completed in the design phase

Financial incentives and disincentives

The way in which the economy functions is at the heart of the conservation challenge. And key to the economy is the set of rules and practices that govern flows of finance. At present the financial system is in serious misalignment with the needs of conservation, offering a wide range of perverse incentives that undermine otherwise worthy conservation efforts. We need to identify and implement reforms to the 'rules of the game' governing financial and capital markets to align them with the needs of conservation and sustainable development. Further, financial incentives strongly influence individual behaviour, and much of conservation is about changing human choice. So at all levels, finance is the hard nucleus of the conservation challenge. In the past few years the attention to 'greening' finance has grown rapidly and it is now much more clear what reforms are needed. However, much of the attention has been focused on finance for climate action. Very little attention has gone into identifying the financial reforms needed to advance conservation and the innovations that might be implemented. These include new thinking on cost internalisation and on valuation and management of environmental risk at the sovereign and corporate levels. This is the gap that Conservation Futures aims to fill.



The dark side - facing up to illegal and illicit behaviour

It is no doubt true that most people wish to labour for the greater good and that they will contribute to it by living and operating within the law and within the social and cultural rules set by society. At the same time, we know that there is a significant part of society for whom this is not true. Conservation cannot succeed without addressing corruption, money laundering, shadow banking, anonymous or opaque corporate structures, tax evasion, the drug and arms trade, human trafficking, internet fraud and the many other elements of what makes up the 'dark side' of human relationships. Conservation Futures will seek to understand the dimensions of the problem and its impact on the prospects for conservation in the future. It will catalogue the many efforts in other sectors to come to grips with the worst manifestations of illegal behaviour and suggest positive actions to address the challenge.



The promises and dangers of technological development

The pace at which technological development is taking place is nothing short of breathtaking. Much of this development holds promise for conservation in at least four broad areas.

First, there is the whole field of bio-technology, including bio-mimicry, bioengineering, etc. How important is it to conserve the full range of species if they or the functions they serve can be replaced through biologically-based technology? Second, we live in an age of rapidly-developing technology based on Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, fintech, blockchain, robotics, etc. that are changing the way we approach problems and the business models that have underpinned our interactions for decades. How can the opportunities best be harnessed to conservation and the dangers avoided? Third, developments in mobile technology, the democratisation of communications, and the explosion of social media have greatly expanded the possibilities for information exchange and airing of views and priorities that are both personal and global. These present an important area of opportunity for conservation. And, finally, there is a wide range of new technological development around remote sensing, tracking, DNA fingerprinting, drone applications and others that can be harnessed for conservation and both improve our real-time understanding of how nature and human activities are changing, and influence those changes.

Embedding biodiversity in key areas of economic activity – e.g. agriculture, land use planning and urban development

A majority of humanity lives in urban areas and the proportion is growing. And a high proportion of productive land is given over to agriculture and livestock development. Conservation cannot be focused largely on the land that is left but needs to find ways to thrive in all areas and under a wide variety of primary landuses. The debate on the role of agriculture is heating up. A new image of agriculture is emerging, combining elements of a return to local production with new developments in food technology and food production systems that have a far lower negative impact on land and ecosystems. Beyond this, the success of conservation depends on more sustainable systems of production and consumption, and on greening supply chains. While potentially vast in scope, a great deal of work has been and is being done in these areas. The design phase will identify both the areas of greatest importance and the most promising developments for conservation.

Demographics and conservation

While the growing world population has always been at the centre of conservation concern, less attention has been paid to the changing nature of the world's demographic make-up and the implications of this for conservation. The demographics of Africa, for example, will have a massive impact on present and future conservation worldwide, either expanding or contracting opportunities for conservation depending on how it evolves. So too will the evolution of the age pyramid in different countries and regions - and how quickly the bulge of young people evolves towards a stabilisation of population. From the present perspective, it is clear that the weight of influence on the future of the world will shift south and east, to urban centres, to young people, and to technologically savvy people; and human migration will be hugely influential. The implications for conservation need to be spelled out and addressed in conservation planning and practice.

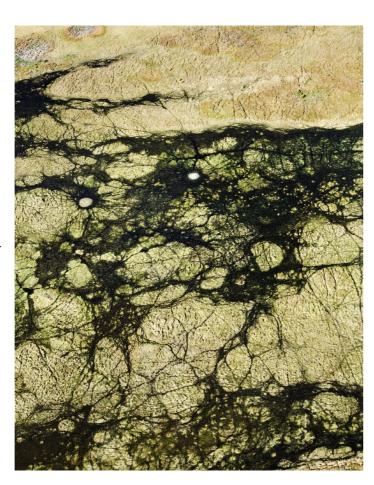


12 - Conservation Futures

Conservation Futures - **13**

New approaches to work, coalitions, networks and business models

The SDGs insist on a transformative change in the way we work, breaking down silos and approaching problems in new and different ways. This requires attention both to the nature of work in a sustainable society – flexible or portfolio employment, new configurations of work and leisure, the balance of types of labour, etc. and approaches to working together. The notion of working in flexible, changing configurations, with innovation built into work methods, is a burgeoning field of study. The current rigid lines between governments, civil society and business need to be broken down and replaced with creative new configurations that allow co-creation and genuine collaboration in the design and deployment of conservation solutions. Conservation Futures must tap into this rapidly developing world and apply its best lessons.



Addressing the problem of specific vs general and short- vs long-term

A fundamental challenge with conservation – and with sustainability more broadly has been the classic dilemma relating to individual choice against broader impact (individual benefit with the cost incurred by others), and to the issue of short-term benefit versus long-term damage and cost. Conservation suffers in particular from these dilemmas. Societies, corporations and individuals are too often driven by the promise of short-term gain and tend to discount longterm consequences. And individuals too often give greater value to immediate benefit even if the cumulative consequences of such individual choices can be disastrous. Behavioural science, behavioural economics, social physics, evolutionary psychology, and other fields are examining these issues and designing new ways to understand and influence consumer decisions. And there is learning to be harvested from many fields, e.g. the nudge approach, social marketing, insights from advertising and public health – all aimed at working out how to change human decisions from short-term and self-centred to more mutualistic and longer term. A key part of this is experience on how to influence political and corporate decision-makers to give more weight to the long-term consequences of their choices. Conservation Futures will explore the state of play in these areas and distil lessons that might improve conservation success.

CONSERVATION FUTURES STYLE

Conservation Futures aims not only to bring intergovernmental, national and private a whole range of new actors and skills to the movements towards innovation and reform conservation table - and in particular from within the broad conservation movement. the world of innovation and entrepreneurship Instead, it will focus on identifying and - but also influencers from other fields such advancing game changers through a strong as business, media, entertainment, faith and many others. Representatives from these fields, outlooks and disciplines will be drawn into the work of the teams in the discovery In short, we wish to introduce positive phase, in the communications and outreach activities, and in events organised under the Conservation Futures work plan.

Conservation Futures aims to recruit new stakeholders and new communities to the shared search for a resilient planet. The approach is not intended to replace the

focus on the change models, change processes and change actors needed to achieve success.

disruption where it is required to break or reverse present negative trends. What emerges from Conservation Futures must be a substantially broadened stakeholder constituency for conservation, with a prominent focus on the private sector.

We wish to generate new insights, new perspectives and new options for effective conservation.



THE INITIAL CONSERVATION FUTURES **PARTNERSHIP**

The initial partners of Conservation Futures are UN Environment, the Luc Hoffmann Institute, and the Oxford Martin School, with support from the World Economic Forum Environment System Initiative.

These champions of the initiative are committed to engage with others on the design and on getting the initiative up and running. An early priority is to expand the partnership, bringing in a better balance and a wider set of perspectives.

14 - Conservation Futures Conservation Futures - 15

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

means of a serious effort at communications, profile building and outreach. The broad purpose is to craft a new narrative - one that excites, mobilises, and focuses on the change possibilities, while deepening understanding of the tension generated by the present catastrophic trends.

The communications plan should be ambitious and varied. It should generate a steady stream of stories that illustrate the range of possibilities and build a sense of excitement about what can be done. The plan should carefully identify a range of target Conservation Futures should identify and audiences. It should include a wide range of communications tools - website, podcasts, blogs, guest articles, a reference service, Twitter feeds, etc. It should recruit and deploy icons in support of Conservation Futures. In particular, it should look into the potential for partnerships with the entertainment industry which, in both rich and poor countries, plays a key role in opinion formation. **Conservation** Futures should engineer an approach to communications and outreach that is multilingual and multi-platform, and encourage multi-directional communications.

Just as climate has its 2-degree ceiling, Conservation Futures should seek out and consider issues that might offer symbols of both the conservation challenge and the direction of change needed. Examples are the future of red meat, or the issue of food waste. And it should carefully consider whether to build and deploy a clear visual identity and

The success of Conservation Futures will also depend on understanding how the solutions it identifies and develops can most effectively influence policy and practice. conservation effort has to date been devoted to building the knowledge base and setting priorities. Moving from intention to action

Building a movement is only possible by has been difficult because of the difficulties of moving from science to policy, politics and action. Success in future will require a far more sophisticated understanding of how to ensure that issues make it across the science-policy interface and move not only to decisions but to implementation. Knowledge on how this interface works - a how best to prepare information such that policy makers might most readily use it - has developed quickly, but is too infrequently applied to addressing conservation challenges. This must change.

> target key forums in which to present its **perspective** – for example, in addition to the intergovernmental forums for conservation (CBD, CITES, CMS, etc.), WEF Davos, UNEA, the annual Eco-Forum Global meeting in China and many others. It should also seek out and communicate with similar change processes from related fields - for example the We Mean Business coalition in the climate field. A very deliberate effort should be placed on identifying change makers and understanding the key to their impact

CONTACT

Those interested in contributing ideas, labour or funding to this, or who simply wish for more information, should contact:

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