



FRIDAY 21st MAY 09:00 AM – 1:00 PM

# INTERNATIONAL BIODIVERSITY DAY SOUTH AFRICA & TEAM EUROPE ARE PART OF THE SOLUTION!



Report: International Biodiversity Day celebration  
(online event) – South Africa & Team Europe are part  
of the solution!

Date: 21 May 2021

Time: 9am to 1pm (SAST)

Moderator: Albertus Louw – director/producer at Lightning Tree Stories

## Background to the event

To observe and celebrate the International Day for Biological Diversity (International Biodiversity Day) on 22 May 2021, South African and European partners organised an online event under the theme “We are part of the solution”, in keeping with the precepts of the Convention on Biological Diversity multilateral treaty.

It was an important step in further developing dialogue and cooperation between the various players in developing the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

In keeping with this theme, the live-streamed public event sought to shine the spotlight on solutions – solutions conceived by community actors, young people, scientists, academics, non-governmental organisations and businesses. These included case studies on how communities can benefit from protecting endangered species, and ways in which businesses can work for nature and people while growing sustainably.

The sharing of these inspiring stories was designed to encourage more local and global partnerships, as we work and commit together for biodiversity. Furthermore, the event hoped to spur individual and collective action by pledging support via the Convention on Biological Diversity’s [People for our Planet aggregator](#).

### **Session format**

The session was just over four hours long, with a number of speakers and European Union ambassadors to South Africa sharing details of their projects, interspersed with a number of Q&A segments.

### **Welcome and opening remarks**

Speaking, fittingly, from the Unesco Magaliesberg Biosphere Reserve, moderator and conservationist Albertus Louw welcomed attendees to the interactive event that aimed to highlight the work being done around biodiversity by Team Europe and South Africa. He urged participants to take action and commit to working for biodiversity.

Dr Riina Kionka, the European Union’s ambassador to South Africa, said that saving our biodiversity essentially means saving the human race – because left unchecked, climate change will destroy biodiversity, which we depend on for our very existence.

She said the “special relationship” between South Africa and Team Europe is a powerful tool that can accelerate a green post-Covid-19 recovery, as the partners work towards the new Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework that will be negotiated at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity ([CBD COP 15](#), commonly known as COP15) later this year in Kunming, China.

Dedicating the event to the memory of the late University of the Witwatersrand’s Professor Bob Scholes, “a giant in the field of climate science”, Dr Kionka said we now have a unique opportunity to rebuild economies post-pandemic to unlock more inclusive and sustainable growth by working with nature, and not against nature, in our economic recovery plans.

Mentioning the EU Green Deal that aims to make Europe's economy sustainable and climate-neutral, she said it is a fallacy that countries have to choose between nature and economic growth, as there are ample opportunities to create nature-friendly employment opportunities and prosperity.

## Keynote speech

### **Tonderai Makoni, coordinator of the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve NPC**

The Vhembe Biosphere Reserve in the northern part of South Africa is one of 10 proclaimed Unesco biosphere reserves in the country, and incorporates parts of the Kruger National Park. Vhembe Biosphere Reserve coordinator Tonderai Makoni outlined how the biosphere's functions align with South Africa's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, which maps out the country's long-term framework for conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources – as well as the fair and equitable use of these resources.

He explained that biosphere reserves provide practical ways to resolve land-use conflict and protect biological diversity, while involving communities in land-use decisions. Importantly, they foster people's connection to their land while celebrating cultural diversity.

Makoni gave examples of how the biosphere concept can be used to guide projects that enhance people's livelihoods while ensuring environmental sustainability. In the Vhembe reserve, the emphasis is on collaborating with people on the ground through demonstration projects. These conserve the region while promoting sustainable development. In one such project, a group of women have "adopted" a river, which they keep clean – protecting the culture of this "land of the legends" that is home to sacred lakes, ancient ruins and historic mountains, while also protecting its biodiversity. Sustainable agriculture is encouraged, and traditional healers are shown how to use plants sustainably.

The Bende Mutale Women's Project can be held up as a flagship project in that it combines climate-smart agriculture with intelligent farming and human-wildlife conflict prevention. This community in the Pafuri area, right on the border of the Kruger National Park, has been plagued by elephants escaping from the park and damaging their property and crops. By planting chillies, these women are now not only earning an income, but the chillies are also a natural deterrent to the destructive elephants.

While emphasising the role of biosphere reserves in facilitating conservation research, Makoni also highlighted the importance of harnessing the "power and energy" of young people in creating awareness around how they can benefit from biodiversity – and here, he said, the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve's Youth Network is playing a vital role in educating communities in the Limpopo province.

Aided by robust partnerships, biospheres can succeed in connecting nature, culture and the economy, he said, foregrounding ways of living, not just conserving – and always with employment creation top of mind.

## ‘We are part of the solution’ – local champions to advance global partnerships

### **Speaker 1: Aurélien Lechevallier, French ambassador to South Africa**

Ambassador Aurélien Lechevallier said France’s biodiversity action plan in Southern Africa is organised around the pillars of knowledge, supporting conservation projects and the economy.

On the knowledge production side, he said it is vital to support scientific research, so we can gain more insights into biodiversity in order to properly protect it. An example is a regional project supported by France in collaboration with the South African National Biodiversity Institute to gain knowledge about ecosystems in South Africa, Namibia and Mozambique.

Working with reserves, wetlands and so on is also important, and here he highlighted a partnership with SANParks on a pilot fire safety project that sees the pairing of the Table Mountain National Park with the national parks of Réunion Island in the Indian Ocean.

A major focus of France’s biodiversity activities in the region is economic, with nature-based solutions and business models being encouraged for companies, particularly in the areas of water, sanitation and health. It is important to work with the private sector and communities to ensure that livelihoods and profits exist alongside ecosystem conservation, Lechevallier said. With the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress coming up in Marseille, France, in September and COP15 in October, he said we should be ready to share solutions that amplify best practices.

### **Speaker 2: Martin Schäfer, German ambassador to South Africa**

Ambassador Martin Schäfer said the loss of biological diversity is a huge risk for human civilisation and for global security. He commended efforts and partnerships to devise mitigating action plans, adding that “we cannot accept another decade of a loss of biodiversity”.

While the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework will offer guidelines for nations, he said it is important for them to involve local partners and communities in any initiatives – at all levels and in all sectors of society.

With Africa being a global biodiversity hotspot, the demand for ecological resources and biological raw materials for food, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics is growing. Interest in South Africa in particular is high not only for organically grown and fair trade products, but also for its research and innovation capabilities. The country has the potential to tap into the growing international trend towards lower ecological footprints as well as socially and environmentally sustainable products, he said.

Tying in with this, Germany’s BioInnovation Africa programme aims to foster European-African business partnerships that support the sustainable use of resources and ensure fair supply chains for the development and marketing of products made from natural indigenous

ingredients. This, Schäfer said, will not only create jobs but will also provide an incentive to preserve Africa's biodiversity.

**Speaker 3: Geraldine Reymenants, general representative of the Government of Flanders in Southern Africa**

Quoting from the Nature Report Flanders 2020 about the "precarious state of our nature", Geraldine Reymenants noted that many of the threats that faced the natural environment 20 years ago remain.

In the case of her country, some improvements have been made in sustainable fishing practices and forest biodiversity – and even wolves have made a reappearance. Having said that, slight improvements in biodiversity do not guarantee healthy and resilient ecosystems, she said, and around the world most of the climate change goals set out for 2020 have not been achieved.

"If we do not want an irreversible decline in biodiversity, we must take action now. A transformative change is necessary," she said. This includes reviewing our consumption and production patterns, mainstreaming nature issues in policymaking, addressing biodiversity in trade agreements and initiating a broad social debate on how we can restore biodiversity.

Reymenants said that Flanders and Team Europe contribute to South Africa's efforts to transition to a climate-resilient society by providing support on adapting to climate change. An example of this is a Flanders-supported World Wide Fund for Nature initiative to build the resilience of coastal communities who are vulnerable to climate change by, among other things, promoting responsible fishing practices. The conservation and restoration of nature is a moral imperative, she stressed, if we are to pass on the richness of our planet to future generations.

**Speaker 4: Luther Anukur, IUCN regional director for Eastern and Southern Africa**

Luther Anukur said South Africa was a founding member of the IUCN, which aims to bring together governments and civil society to build partnerships for action that will influence policy and practices in nature conservation.

He said the IUCN World Conservation Congress in France will emphasise the notion of "one nature, one future" and that the world shares a common natural heritage. It is a golden opportunity, he observed, to influence the global sustainability and biodiversity conservation agenda and push for more collective action.

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, African countries, in particular, should seize the chance to integrate pro-biodiversity actions into their recovery plans, he said. Protected and conserved areas in Africa play a key role in safeguarding biodiversity and wildlife systems, and it is with this in mind that the IUCN and the Rwandan government will host the first IUCN Africa Protected Areas Congress in March 2022.

Anukur said it takes each one of us – and partnerships across boundaries – to arrest biodiversity loss.

**Speaker 5: Hugo Rivera Mendoza, deputy team leader for the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework – EU support project**

Hugo Mendoza said his EU-financed project is facilitating a participatory process for the adoption of a new biodiversity framework later this year, and emphasised that it sees dialogue and the exchange of views as being essential to the development of this framework.

In this spirit, it co-organised a youth forum at the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve where youth representatives from several African countries came together to discuss and construct their own ideas for the new framework, and has worked with the South African Youth Biodiversity Network towards the same goal.

He said that in order to save our planet's biodiversity and secure humanity's future, we need to reconcile environmental, social and economic aspects, and all stakeholders need to work together towards a common goal as we head towards COP15.

**Speaker 6: Ingrid Coetzee, director at the ICLEI Cities Biodiversity Center**

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is a global network of local and regional governments working towards sustainable urban development. ICLEI's Cities Biodiversity Center is located in Cape Town – one of the most biodiverse cities in the world, which is setting an example by investing in green infrastructure and removing alien invasive plants that present a fire risk.

Ingrid Coetzee said cities around the world have come up with nature-based solutions to deal with, for example, catchment management issues and sustainable urban drainage.

Another local example of a city working to counteract biodiversity loss is eThekweni, she said, which devised the uMngeni Ecological Infrastructure Partnership, working with business and communities to restore ecosystems to address water quality and quantity issues.

Cities and towns have a strong voice and are a pivotal part of the solution, she said, since they are adept at networking, sharing experiences and learning from each other. The CitiesWithNature initiative is a case in point, with the Edinburgh Declaration setting out cities' vision for the new global biodiversity framework. Working together, she said, we can make sure that biodiversity is mainstreamed and integrate human life and nature into urban planning to make a difference.

**Speaker 7: Rerani Ramaano, project coordinator with the South African Youth Biodiversity Network**

Rerani Ramaano said the South African Youth Biodiversity Network, the local chapter of the Global Youth Biodiversity Network, was founded in 2017 to mobilise and equip South Africa's young people for the implementation of South Africa's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. This is because South Africa is a youthful nation and the youth's voice on biodiversity issues needs to be heard.

Since then, the network has been active in engaging with and mobilising local youth in order to learn about the Convention on Biological Diversity and represent their views in Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework meetings. To this end, consultation meetings have been held in six provinces to date, with delegates travelling by bus (instead of by car or plane) to limit the network members' carbon footprint while gathering views to inform the new framework.

This culminated in last year's African Youth Biodiversity Forum in the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve – of which the South African Youth Biodiversity Network was an implementing partner – to bring together the continent's young people to reflect on the “zero draft” of the new biodiversity framework. Next up is a capacity-building workshop with the Vhembe Youth Network in June, to extend the role of South Africa's youth in the bigger vision of living in harmony with nature, she said.

### **Q&A segment**

During the “fireside chat” section, the IUCN's Anukur responded to a question on teaching rural populations about conservation by saying that local people understand a lot about conservation intuitively. He emphasised the importance of harvesting local knowledge when identifying biodiversity issues to tackle in concert with communities, while empowering and building their capacity.

German ambassador Schäfer replied to a question about what the EU is doing to encourage the World Bank to not finance projects that destroy marine and terrestrial environments by saying there is mounting pressure for change by the international community. He said, for example, that it is becoming increasingly difficult to finance coal projects. People are becoming more concerned about the loss of biodiversity and are exerting pressure on those in power, and he was confident that positive change will come.

Reymenants addressed a question about measures being taken to mitigate the northern hemisphere's “unsustainable demands” on biodiversity, saying the first step is to integrate and mainstream biodiversity in environmental policymaking and international trade agreements. In Flanders, for example, she said, there is an increasing call for the local production of food and “farm to fork” solutions to ease pressure on the environment.

In response to a question about mainstreaming indigenous knowledge in decision-making, Mendoza said there is positive momentum in this regard. He said there is an awareness that integrating conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity into local and rural development is essential from an economic, environmental and social point of view. Here, policymakers should give stakeholders (including traditional actors) a space to present their views and contributions to inform policymaking.

Asked for examples of cities that have incorporated biodiversity into their planning in innovative ways, Coetzee singled out urban greening in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania as a case in point. She said the city, academics, young people, business and other stakeholders have embarked on a process of identifying nature's contributions to people in the city, developed a “thematic atlas” of these benefits and come up with successful methodologies to, for example, deal with air pollution and the “heat island” effect. This concept is now embedded in the city's decision-making processes, and is used by the local university to

teach planners and engineers how to mainstream biodiversity in planning and decision-making.

Ramaano said in reply to a question about the youth's priorities around protecting biodiversity that many young people in South Africa need to first understand what biodiversity means on the ground, in practical terms. They prefer seeing concrete projects that illustrate the importance of biodiversity over simply hearing about biodiversity policy, so they can see first-hand the importance of conserving, for example, bird biodiversity.

## 'We are part of the solution for the sustainable development of communities living with endangered species' – Pro-Nature and IUCN Save our Species session

Solutions for sustainable rural development and sustainable wildlife management with the Pro-Nature Enterprises for the People of Southern Africa project

### **Julia Levin, country director for South Africa at Conservation International**

Julia Levin spoke about her organisation's work to promote healthy rangelands, specifically through the Pro-Nature project, supported by the EU, the French Development Agency and the French Facility for Global Environment.

She said in many parts of the world, communities use their natural resources in unsustainable ways simply because they have no economic alternative. Conservation South Africa (the local iteration of Conservation International) believes that conservation can offer concrete benefits to farmers and communities if they are shown that protecting the environment is a viable and attractive choice. For that reason, the organisation's efforts focus on developing nature-based solutions for development while promoting African stewardship of those solutions.

Much of Africa is covered by rangelands, primarily suited to wildlife and livestock grazers. In South Africa, with support from European partners, the organisation has tested responses to rangeland restoration in Namaqualand's Succulent Karoo, the Umzimvubu catchment area and the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Reserve, bringing stakeholders together to test sustainable solutions that can be shared with the rest of Africa. This includes exploring ways to raise livestock alongside and in harmony with wildlife, preserving cultural traditions, and fostering an understanding of how biodiversity connects with local culture.

The Pro-Nature Enterprises Project has been developing a pilot project at scale to show how people and nature can live together, with the ultimate goal of conserving essential habitats and ecosystems by unlocking nature-friendly enterprises in three Southern African transfrontier conservation areas: Kavango-Zambezi, Greater Limpopo and Lower Zambezi-Mana Pools. Harnessing the might of a number of partners at five sites across three

countries, the target is to ensure one million hectares of habitat are conserved while benefiting some 18 000 people through the creation of nature-friendly enterprises.

Levin said a major focus of the project is to document incentive-based conservation models for the benefit of South Africa and the continent, and show the benefits of doing things differently, such as planned grazing. The aim, she said, is to create a common vision with communities and an approach that responds to the needs of people and nature – and which motivates others to follow suit.

## Solutions for overcoming Covid-19-related conservation/ecotourism challenges with IUCN Save Our Species

### **Remco van Merm, species conservation grants coordinator, IUCN**

Although the IUCN used to be concerned primarily with compiling the red list of threatened species, in 2010 it broadened its ambit from just assessing these species' extinction risk to also catalysing action to save them, explained Remco van Merm.

He said the Save Our Species (SOS) programme was created to identify projects by frontline conservation actors and channel donor funds to them in the form of grants, in order to achieve positive impacts on the ground for biodiversity and those who depend on it. The largest of these donors to ensure the long-term survival of threatened species is the EU.

Species, habitats and people are the three pillars of the IUCN's work, because it believes that conservation needs to happen in partnership with the people who live with endangered species. The largest SOS programme is the African Wildlife Initiative, which is co-funded by the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships.

It primarily targets halting the decline of large African carnivores such as lions, leopards, cheetahs, African wild dogs and Ethiopian wolves through improving law enforcement, preventing wildlife trafficking and poaching, and addressing human-wildlife conflicts, with the close involvement of communities.

Threatened species grants and rapid response or emergency grants are available, he said.

### **Steve McKean, director, Conservation Outcomes**

Steve McKean of Conservation Outcomes talked about the blue swallow habitat, conservation, management and monitoring project, which is funded through IUCN SOS African Wildlife rapid relief grants.

The project aims to conserve the swallow – an intra-African migrant – and its threatened grassland habitat in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga. There are fewer than 250 birds – or between 35 and 50 pairs – left in South Africa, McKean stated.

The bird is critically endangered in South Africa – far more endangered than the rhino – primarily because of the loss of its grassland habitat. This has been exacerbated by Covid-19, because landowners have been under pressure to turn more land into agricultural land, among other factors.

The Conservation Outcomes/BirdLife South Africa partnership has been securing and supporting management of several areas of the threatened Midlands mistbelt grassland in the southern KwaZulu-Natal Midlands.

It is also supporting landowners in their conservation efforts, as well as expanding its efforts into Mpumalanga and Limpopo, where the birds have historically occurred, noted McKean.

**Dr Roelie Kloppers, CEO, WILDTRUST**

Dr Roelie Kloppers of WILDTRUST discussed how the IUCN SOS rapid relief grant is supporting conservation of the black rhino and other endangered species in the community-owned Somkhanda Reserve in northern KwaZulu-Natal. The area is part of a conservation corridor for the conservation of megafauna.

WILDTRUST has worked with the local community since 2005, following a successful land claim. With 16 000 hectares under conservation, the aim is to create jobs in tourism to sustain the community.

The reserve supports the conservation of black rhino and other endangered species, such as wild dogs, both of which have been reintroduced into the area, and makes a significant contribution to species and landscape conservation in South Africa.

It also creates jobs – 54 people are employed on the reserve, and through seasonal work an additional 250 people receive some form of work. The reserve also supplies water to about 5 000 people not currently served by the municipality.

Through a grant from the Government of Flanders, the reserve also acts as a hub for a lot of other community conservation work, Kloppers said.

Covid-19 has had a severe impact on the reserve and the rapid relief grant has made a big difference, including supporting the anti-poaching unit and helping to improve monitoring of endangered species.

**Fiona Evans, conservationist, Wildlife ACT South Africa**

Fiona Evans of Wildlife ACT South Africa discussed the threatened species and community conservation project in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park in northern KwaZulu-Natal (Zululand) and explained how an IUCN SOS grant has allowed Wildlife Act and its partners to continue their work during the Covid-19 pandemic.

She said the main objective of the project is to support the continued conservation of threatened species populations in the park through monitoring, while promoting human-wildlife coexistence and improving the livelihoods of neighbouring communities.

The project focuses on four main areas: wildlife monitoring; human-wildlife coexistence; emergency response; and business upliftment.

The grant assisted with the supply of tracking devices for wild dogs, cheetah and vultures, and allowed teams to conduct two field-monitoring sessions every day. In addition, 10 state-

of-the-art cameras sending real-time notifications from strategic locations provide helpful information and improve security in the reserve.

The project has also allowed for costs to communities to be reduced through better collaboration with park management, and has helped informal communities to diversify their income-generating activities, e.g. through small cafes, farming and homestays.

### **Q&A segment**

In response to a question about the impact of Covid-19 on poaching, particularly on rhino, Dr Roelie Kloppers of WILDTRUST said that during Covid-19 and the hard lockdown there was a massive decline in rhino poaching in the Somkhanda Reserve, but an increase in poaching for the pot. Unfortunately, with borders opening up, rhino poaching is picking up again now.

Steve McKean of Conservation Outcomes was asked what biodiversity stewardship is. He said it is a voluntary mechanism whereby an organisation works with private and communal landowners to secure important biodiversity areas on their land. Most of South Africa's biodiversity is on private and communal land, and the state doesn't have the resources to buy and manage land for conservation – in future, much of conservation will involve working with people on the ground.

Asked where her organisation's work can be replicated across the Southern African region, Fiona Evans of Wildlife ACT said it can definitely be scaled up and some of it – particularly species monitoring – is already in use in other areas.

## **We are part of the solution for the global biodiversity framework – South African businesses' key role for nature**

**Solution: accelerating pro-nature enterprises**

### **Franziska Spoerri, head of Economic Cooperation and Development, Swiss Embassy in South Africa, ABioSA programme**

Franziska Spoerri of the Swiss Embassy to South Africa's ABioSA programme said her organisation works for sustainable growth that benefits everyone and everything –not just people, but also the environment and biodiversity.

In South Africa, the organisation works with partners towards a resource-efficient and pro-nature private sector, supporting entrepreneurs and fostering sustainable value chains.

She showed a simple illustration of the marula value chain and said ABioSA wants to contribute to conditions that promote investment and competitiveness, as well as biodiversity and ecological sustainability.

She explained how the project aims to support the creation of an innovative biotrade sector that creates jobs and taps into local knowledge, with the livelihoods of rural people at the centre of this through creating jobs.

The project works with selected indigenous plant species, and ABioSA's activities include fostering sector-development plans for key species such as marula, honeybush, buchu and aloe ferox, she explained, saying that ABioSA also provides technical and financial support to businesses already involved in the sector, e.g. baobab harvesters.

EcoProducts in Limpopo, for example, coordinates more than 100 local rural women who collect the fruit of the baobab trees, producing baobab powder and oil. The new global market of baobab oil has secured the economic future of hundreds of women, she noted.

Such initiatives not only help to reduce poverty, but also make people independent and proud of their knowledge.

**Ghislain Rieb, senior investment officer, AFD Biodiversity Partners Programme**

Ghislain Rieb of the French Development Agency (AFD) talked about the agency's Biodiversity Partners Programme, which aims to train professionals "differently" on biodiversity. The programme can be accessed here:

<https://www.biodiversitypartnersprogram.com/>.

He said the pilot programme, running from June to October this year, is designed as an acceleration programme and focuses on Southern Africa, targeting intrapreneurs (working for an organisation and having biodiversity projects they want to develop) and entrepreneurs developing their own projects.

The programme assists them with soft skills to develop their projects, including training and the development of business skills, as well as "background training about biodiversity. Pro-nature projects – with a conservation, people and economic component – are targeted.

He said 200 proposals have been received from prospective participants, of which a group of 20 will go through the programme in three phases to enhance their skills in terms of biodiversity and product development.

Rieb also introduced a virtual art expo showing some of the projects AFD is supporting in Southern Africa in terms of biodiversity, which can be accessed here:

<https://www.afd.fr/en/actualites/interactive-online-exhibition-features-projects-protect-biodiversity>.

Solution: mapping/accounting for biodiversity to encourage investment and pro-nature business decisions

**Domitilla Raimondo, South African National Biodiversity Institute programme manager, threatened species unit**

Domitilla Raimondo, programme manager in the Threatened Species Unit at the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), talked about the work being done in South Africa to map priority areas for biodiversity. Part of this is to find out which species are threatened and which ecosystems are close to collapse.

She explained that this South African biodiversity mapping ensures all species on land, in the sea and in river systems, and other areas are assessed, while the same is done for ecosystems. This information is used to guide where the most important places are that need to be kept intact.

She noted that there are 465 different types of ecosystems just on South Africa's land areas, and more than 5 000 threatened species in the country. Considering all this, targets are set to ensure that populations will persist in the long term.

Sector-specific guidance has been developed for development sectors, such as mining. SANBI has also, in cooperation with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, developed an environmental impact assessment screening tool, which can be used to trigger sensitivities to development in areas that are assessed, and to ensure that correct decisions are made and appropriate development happens. It also helps with forward planning to ensure minimum impact.

Raimondo also explained the new field of natural capital accounts, to inform decision-making and allow governments, businesses and other parties to keep an account of nature.

**Dr Gabi Teren, programme manager, National Biodiversity and Business Network, Endangered Wildlife Trust**

Dr Gabi Teren of the Endangered Wildlife Trust's National Biodiversity and Business Network (NBBN) said the network's strategic imperatives are to protect species and habitats, and also to benefit people, bearing in mind that businesses both depend on and affect biodiversity. Businesses have footprints and are at risk from biodiversity loss.

The World Economic Forum has ranked global risks to businesses, and biodiversity loss is among the top risks. Challenges in South Africa include a lack of awareness, capacity and tools to support businesses in addressing biodiversity as a business risk.

Dr Teren discussed the work of the NBBN's Biodiversity Disclosure Project, which entails an eight-question survey of JSE-listed companies around "biodiversity mainstreaming", and presented some of the results.

The fact that the average scores were very low on all questions and in all sectors shows that companies are only mainstreaming biodiversity into their impacts for compliance reasons, she said. "Companies small and large should be able to measure their biodiversity impact."

The NBBN wants to build the capacity of businesses to act as a positive force for conservation, and to provide a platform for businesses to engage with each other and discover nature-positive solutions that lead to sustainable business growth and opportunities.

She also listed three solutions offered by the National Biodiversity and Business Network: the Biodiversity Disclosure Project, the Biological Diversity Protocol and the Mainstreaming Toolkit.

### **Dr Joël Houdet, Biodiversity Disclosure Project, Endangered Wildlife Trust**

Dr Joël Houdet of the Endangered Wildlife Trust's Biodiversity Disclosure Project presented an introduction to the development of the Biological Diversity Protocol (BDP), the result of an international collaboration with more than 40 contributors from all over the world, and shared some of the key highlights of this technical document.

He noted that it's about trying to provide an accounting framework to help any company consolidate net impact data on biodiversity, targeting any sector of industry, and any step of the value chain.

The BDP focuses on two key impacts, on ecosystems and species, he said, explaining the steps of the protocol to do a biodiversity footprint, and how a "balance sheet" is drawn up showing a company's biodiversity footprint.

When building your biodiversity inventory, you need to start at the level of direct impact (for instance, when you build a road or bridge, or clear some land) and also look at indirect impact, such as greenhouse gas emissions, he said.

Houdet also discussed the concept of positive and negative impact, and the "impact mitigation hierarchy" used by companies that want to achieve no net impact. As an example, he explained that if a company destroys one hectare of wetland, it needs to offset this by securing a wetland habitat somewhere else, agreed on by different stakeholders. This helps build a "simple accounting system".

### **Simone Liefferink, Sibanye-Stillwater**

Simone Liefferink of precious metals mining company Sibanye-Stillwater shared an industry perspective on biodiversity commitments and said the company wants to be part of the solution when it comes to responsible management of biodiversity resources.

She said Sibanye-Stillwater recognises the need for responsible management of its mining resources. Only through joint efforts, including with the government, can the company's goals of no net loss be achieved.

Although there is no easy solution, the company is committed to this long journey, because there is no sustainable future without sustainable biodiversity resources. It hopes to overcome the challenges through science-based, practical measurement targets and approaches.

Liefferink said the company uses legislative guidelines and also tries to contribute to the development thereof. It has also looked at international best practices and found both a national and an international solution to use in its biodiversity efforts.

On its current trajectory, Sibanye-Stillwater is already aligning with the Biological Diversity Protocol, but is aiming for continuous improvement.

### **Q&A segment**

Asked about the possibility of expansion of the AFD's Biodiversity Partners Programme, Ghislain Rief said while it is a bit early to say, it is something the AFD would like to repeat, considering the number of responses.

To a question about how it can be ensured that development sectors take up biodiversity priorities, Domitilla Raimondo of SANBI said this takes up "90% of work with development sectors – there is no such thing as light-touch mainstreaming".

Dr Gabi Teren of NBBN was asked why there is a need for a South African network, when there are many international networks doing similar work. She said, "Africa is full of unique people, environments and challenges, so we need to apply best international practice, but find African solutions to African problems."

## Summary

In summary, Albertus Louw reminded participants that "we are at a major crossroads with regard to biodiversity and challenges", and there are major initiatives that need to be built on. "And we need to keep spreading the news, so that this conversation can become more mainstream, and the solutions more widely picked up."

He made a call to action, asking all to commit to working together for biodiversity and to make their pledges on the People for our Planet aggregator, here:

<https://www.cbd.int/article/people-for-our-planet-aggregator>

Ends