



PUTTING NATURE AT THE CENTER

As 2020 unfolds, the world begins to see that this is no ordinary year.

It has been 20 years since the world first celebrated the International Day of Biodiversity (IDB) - a day that appreciates the total variety of life on Earth and reviews our global commitments for its protection, conservation and sustainable use. This comes at an opportune time for everyone to rethink our ways to treat nature and biodiversity and recalibrate our approach for the sake of our health and perpetual prosperity, not only to overcome the ongoing global pandemic, but also to arrive at solutions that are centered on nature and biodiversity as the key basis for our sustainable future.

Building on this 20-year journey, this year we will be closing an important chapter with the end of the UN Decade on Biodiversity (2011-2020), but we will continue to move forward as we open the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, and Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030).

The UNDP/GEF Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (YSLME) Phase II Project welcomes this new decade with optimism and reaffirms its commitment to biodiversity protection through the implementation of the YSLME Strategic Action Programme (SAP).

Habitat loss, including degradation and fragmentation, is the most important cause of biodiversity loss globally. Reducing the rate of habitat loss, and eventually halting it, is essential to protect biodiversity and to maintain the ecosystem functions fundamental to supporting human livelihoods. Studies have shown that growing urbanization and years of massive reclamation, coupled with pollution and climate change, have resulted to loss of more than 50% of Yellow Sea's original tidal flats (1980-2010). Such loss has impacted greatly to various species that rely in these habitats, including the migratory waterbirds. Land-based pollutants, alien invasive species, and overfishing have also threatened fish stocks and other marine species in the Yellow Sea.

UNDP/GEF YSLME Phase II Project through its regional cooperative platform has undertaken the following initiatives:

- Assessments of status and conservation gaps of coastal and marine habitats, and species of concern, for integration into marine spatial plans and other area-based management measures;
- Development of the 2020-2030 YSLME Biodiversity Conservation Plan;
- Support to develop a network of marine protected areas (MPAs) based on functional connectivity to strengthen their management effectiveness in particular for Spotted Seals and Spoon-billed Sandpipers;
- Support the use of constructed wetland as nutrient sinks and repositories of carbon and other ecosystem services; and
- Support to research, exchanges and knowledge-building activities on application of science-based approach in conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity of the Yellow Sea.

Currently, the YSLME Phase II Project in cooperation with its member countries (PR China and RO Korea) and partner organizations are finalizing the updated YSLME SAP (2020-2030) that highlights nature-based solutions and ecosystem approach as its core responses. This important initiative would serve as the Yellow Sea region's contribution to ongoing development of a stronger global biodiversity policy framework for 2020-2030.

IDB 2020's theme of "***Our solutions are in nature***" aptly describes how the new norm should be during and post-COVID19 pandemic. Together, let us establish a new way of life that works with nature and for nature.

From all of us at the YSLME PMO, we wish you a happy International Day for Biological Diversity!
