

**COP27**

# Promising action for nature and climate is easy, credible action a whole different matter

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*Bonn, 7 November 2022.* Egypt has dubbed the high-level segment of the 2022 UN Climate Change Conference in Sharm El Sheikh as the *Climate Implementation Summit*, suggesting that governments' climate pledges (or 'nationally determined contributions' [NDCs]) must be rapidly implemented. However, current government pledges fall so far short. Therefore, mere implementation would spell the death of the goal to limit global warming to 1.5°C. Moreover, a singular focus on implementing climate action may result in trade-offs with other aspects of sustainable development, including the protection and restoration of nature.

Governments and other actors must go beyond mere implementation and take bold steps to raise ambition. Last year's climate conference in Glasgow (COP26) saw the mobilisation of an unprecedented number of businesses, cities and other non-state and subnational actors. They voluntarily pledged to climate neutrality (*Race to Zero*); to leverage financing (*Glasgow Financial Action for Net Zero*, GFANZ); and to build resilience among communities at risk (*Race to Resilience*). There is an enormous opportunity for governments to leverage the ambition of these actors to lower emissions, leverage financing, and build adaptive capacities. And yet, only a handful of governments (5 percent) have referred to voluntary non-state and subnational action in their NDCs ([UNFCCC 2022](#)).

**„Net-zero commitments must be aligned with protecting and restoring natural ecosystems. A singular focus on emissions reduction is not an option.“**

It is understandable that governments have been slow to recognise the potential of non-state and subnational actors. Making big promises is easy; following through with credible action is a different matter. Moreover, even if non-state and subnational actors delivered on their promises, reliable data and analysis is necessary for governments to appraise their contributions.

An important step in providing authoritative data and analysis is the release of "*Global Climate Action 2022: how have international initiatives delivered, and what more is possible*", by IDOS, Radboud University, NewClimate Institute, the University of Oxford, Utrecht University, and DataDriven Envirolab at UNC Chapel Hill. The report assesses the contribution of more than 600 initiatives to decarbonisation and climate resilience. One major finding is the fact that more than half of major climate initiatives launched at UN climate conferences and summits since 2014 do not deliver necessary behavioral changes or improvements in environmental indicators (including the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions). Moreover, initiatives that mainly seek to build resilience and adaptive

capacities perform worse than climate mitigation initiatives. This is a concern for broader sustainable development. For instance, the Race to Zero has seen a surge of participation by more than 8,000 businesses, 500 investors, 1,000 cities and 1,000 educational institutions committing to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 latest. However, the use of carbon offsets, e.g., through large-scale tree plantations, could harm other aspects of sustainable development. A singular focus on emissions reduction is therefore not an option: net-zero commitments must be aligned with the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems.

With both the UN Climate Conference and the UN Biodiversity Conference taking place this year, COP27 provides an important opportunity to integrate nature and climate action. For instance, IDOS, together with the Dahdaleh Institute for Global Health Research at York University, the Zoological Society of London, Sociedade de Pesquisa em Vida Selvagem e Educação Ambiental (SPVS) and Boticário Group Foundation, will convene an official side-event to discuss how nature-based climate actions in cities can simultaneously protect and recover nature and planetary health while helping to achieve climate targets. Such deliberation among researchers, policy-makers and practitioners is key to prevent single-minded climate mitigation action and to avoid tradeoffs with nature and planetary health.