The Legacy Landscapes Fund

Safeguarding outstanding biodiversity for humanity – the next level of conservation
The challenge
A large percentage of our globally significant biodiversity is to be found in just a limited number of outstanding Biodiversity Areas or “legacy landscapes”. Protected areas are commonly regarded as the most effective tools to safeguard these “legacy landscapes” when they are well managed and respect the needs and rights of indigenous and local communities. With the Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the international community agreed to protect 17% of the earth’s terrestrial surface by 2020. However, considering the importance of biodiversity and the increasing threats, particularly in times of climate change, scientists recommend protecting at least 30% of the terrestrial surface by 2030 so as to safeguard up to 70% of terrestrial biodiversity.

Despite the fact that the number of protected areas has increased in recent years, habitat integrity and biodiversity are, more than ever, under severe pressure. According to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), species extinction rates have reached a dangerous and unprecedented level: one million species are threatened with extinction, with grave consequences for people around the world. Around 60% of global ecosystem services have been degraded over the past 50 years, and we are continuing to deplete our natural resources at an alarming rate. Estimates indicate that two to five trillion dollars’ worth of ecosystem services are lost each year from deforestation alone.

By managing “legacy landscapes” properly while at the same time respecting the needs of local communities and their human rights, we can conserve a significant share of biodiversity on earth. Many of these outstanding “legacy landscapes” are in developing countries and face a variety of complex challenges. Overcoming these challenges requires sufficient and sustained financial resources. Currently, only 13% of the world’s annual spending on protected areas is allocated to developing countries. In addition, the funding is often short-term, project-based and insufficient to cover investment and recurrent costs. Thus, present approaches do not mobilise and coordinate enough funding from different sources to ensure that the most important “legacy landscapes” for biodiversity conservation are sustainably financed.

Natural habitats and biodiversity are crucial for our life on earth. They are the backbone of ecosystem services, providing – among other things – fresh water, clean air and fertile soils for food production, storing carbon dioxide and offering protection from natural disasters.
The strategy
Halting the dramatic loss of biodiversity requires a bold new approach for protected areas in terms of scope, structure, accountability and financing. As an instrument to serve this strategy we introduce the Legacy Landscapes Fund.

The Legacy Landscapes Fund seeks to obtain significant and sustained funding, both from public and philanthropic sources, with the aim of building a network of the world’s most important “legacy landscapes” while at the same time respecting user rights.

The Fund is results-oriented. It will finance long-lasting partnerships between experienced NGOs and protected areas authorities as well as indigenous and local communities in order to efficiently conserve and manage protected areas and their buffer zones.

It will focus on places and partnerships that promise effective biodiversity conservation, including:

→ New and existing terrestrial protected areas and landscapes that are biologically outstanding and where the long-term conservation of habitats, species and ecological processes is viable.

→ Up-front and single-compact closure of long-term (20+ years) commitments by partnerships to be funded by a consortium of public sector and private philanthropic donors.

→ Funding of operations based on key performance indicators.

Its financial commitments will be consistent with national and international conservation strategies and with social and ecological standards and safeguards, which includes acknowledging the needs and human rights of the indigenous and local population. Those commitments must support the implementation of the UN Convention on Biodiversity and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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The set-up
The Legacy Landscapes Fund is a joint initiative by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), KfW Development Bank (KfW), Agence Française de Développement (AFD), Campaign for Nature (CfN), Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF). Additional public and private actors are invited to join the initiative.

The Legacy Landscapes Fund will be a learning organisation. Key resource persons from civil society, the private sector, development partners and partner countries will be invited to establish a learning community to support this process in line with experience and best practice.

A feasibility study for the programmatic and legal framework, financing and operationalisation of the Legacy Landscapes Fund is currently being carried out. Provided the outcome of the study is positive, the first commitments as well as the formal set-up and endowment of the Fund are expected in early 2020.