



International Union of Biological Sciences

Background, Mission and Action Plan 2023-2026

“IUBS, what we were, what we achieved and where we go!”

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sustainable use of our global resources depends on careful consideration of the limits and value of nature. The biosphere defines the benchmarks in assessments and offers bioscience-based solutions. IUBS is the voice of all of biology in this discussion on global, international and regional floors. IUBS fosters global collaboration in science, supports scientific research, advances communication and impactful contributions, empowers early career scientists, advances education in biology and beyond, realizes dialogue with policymakers and society, and promotes equity and ethics in biological sciences. To reach these goals, IUBS orchestrates a portfolio of established instruments and encourages members and stakeholders to propose new directions and to get engaged with its activities.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

IUBS — 105 Years of Successful Engagement for Biology

Since its establishment in 1919, the International Union of Biological Sciences (IUBS) has been a catalyst for international collaboration and scientific progress in the field of biology across borders. In its 105-year history, IUBS has continually demonstrated its commitment to advancing biological sciences and fostering the recognition of biology on a global scale. For over a century, IUBS has facilitated partnerships between scientists, institutions, and organizations worldwide. It is a recognized actor at the levels of United Nations organizations, the International Science Council, international scientific societies, national focal points and *ad hoc* networks. These collaborations have transcended political and geographical boundaries, creating a robust global network of biological researchers.

IUBS's enduring legacy is marked by a series of significant milestones, collaborations, and contributions that have defined its success over the past century. IUBS covers activities ranging from taxonomy and molecular biosciences to ecosystems biology, from science to education, empowerment, and equity, as outlined by the following selected initiatives and programs:

- IUBS participates and drives setting standards by its proactive involvement in **nomenclature and taxonomy**. IUBS supported the establishment of the **Botanical Nomenclature Committee** (1929–1938), **International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature** (ICZN, 1939–1948), and with



further projects such as the **Commission on Bionomenclature** and more recently the participation in the project **Governance of Global Taxonomic Lists** since 2020.

- The **International Commission on Laboratory Animal Research** (ICLAR/ICLAS) assessed the needs and replacement options and strategies in animal research. In 1955, IUBS appointed a committee to evaluate problems in science fields that relied on animal research subjects.
- The initiative **Towards Theoretical Biology** (1961–1991) recognized and evaluated the potential of modeling and quantification using computational approaches.
- The achievements of the **International Biological Program** (IBP) (1964–1974) led to the United Nations Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, the UNESCO Man & Biosphere Program (MAB), Scientific Committee of Problems of the Environment (SCOPE) of the International Council of Science (ISC; formerly ICSU), and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).
- IUBS has been actively engaged in ethical considerations through its **Bioethics** program 1974.
- Worldwide **biological education** (**Commission on Biological Education** (CBE) 1976, Climate Education (**TROP ICSU** since 2017) is part of IUBS's commitment to holistic and sustainable approaches in biological sciences.
- IUBS has been instrumental in **biodiversity conservation initiatives** with exemplary past programs such as the **Decade of the Tropics** (1983) and **DIVERSITAS** (1991).



- The program **Science for Health and Well Being** (SHWB, 1997) was developed by IUBS and is nowadays reflected in the concept of One Health.
- IUBS supports climate change studies with the **integrative Climate Change Biology** program in 1997 and **Biodiversity Consequences of Global Change** (BCGC) in 2009.
- IUBS supports **Informatics and Data Science in Biology** and **Open Science** in general by conducting programs such as **Unifying Biology through Informatics** (UBTI, 2017) and **Biodiversity and Health Big Data** (BHBD, since 2017).
- IUBS is a major driver in closing the gender gap and participates in the **Global Approach to the Gender Gap in Mathematical and Natural Sciences** (2017-2019)

These past initiatives underscore just a few examples of IUBS activities over the last century, demonstrating its enduring commitment to holistic and sustainable approaches in biological sciences.

As IUBS embarks on the next phase of its journey, the legacy of these programs together with the lessons learned from our engagement over the past 105 years provide a strong foundation. The Union, anchored in a collaborative spirit, remains dedicated to advancing biological sciences, fostering collaboration, and addressing the pressing challenges facing our planet.

The Central Role of Biology for a Healthy Planet

Biology occupies a central role in addressing the complex challenges facing our planet. Biology is benchmark, readout and solution provider for sustainable action. From climate change to biodiversity loss, biology provides the foundation for developing sustainable solutions. Recognizing the pivotal position of biological sciences, IUBS plays a role in advancing scientific knowledge and fostering collaborations to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals of the UN (SDGs), e.g. those related to life on land (SDG 15) and life below water (SDG 14). In fact, most SDGs depend on biology and bioeconomy, e.g., those related to poverty elimination (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2) and good health and well-being (SDG 3).

Biology, as a foundational science, provides essential insights into the functioning of individual organisms, requirements, and value of biodiversity, functionality of ecosystems and the intricate interactions between living organisms. IUBS, through its diverse activities and collaborative initiatives, contributes to our understanding of fundamental biological processes. This knowledge forms the basis for developing innovative solutions to address pressing environmental issues, including climate change, loss of biodiversity, and emerging infectious diseases.

The Union's commitment to catalyzing impactful research and education underscores the importance of biological knowledge in shaping policies and practices for a healthier planet. By providing a global platform for scientists from various disciplines and nationalities, IUBS facilitates the exchange of ideas and expertise, fostering a collaborative approach to tackle complex challenges.

Moreover, IUBS's engagement in international conferences, collaborative projects, and strategic partnerships reflects its dedication to promoting research, training, and education in biological sciences. Through these efforts, the Union aims to influence policies and advocate for equitable access and benefit-sharing of knowledge and resources, contributing to broader global initiatives for sustainable development.

In summary, the centrality of biology for a healthy planet and as a benchmark for sustainable action, as championed by scientific NGOs like IUBS, not only underscores the critical contribution of biological sciences to global sustainability but also aligns with the broader framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. IUBS's multifaceted activities contribute to the realization of SDG targets and emphasize the importance of collaboration and shared knowledge in addressing the intricate challenges facing our planet.

MISSION AND VISION

Core Mission of IUBS — From Understanding towards Bio-Based Solutions

IUBS has been at the forefront of initiating global collaborations in biological research and education. Our mission is to unite scientists, educators, and policymakers to address critical challenges, promoting a holistic understanding of biology for the sustainability of our planet.

At the heart of the IUBS mission is the dedication to progress from understanding basic biological processes to crafting innovative and creative solutions based on bioscience. Drawing inspiration from past endeavors, IUBS has played roles in shaping global agendas as outlined in the retrospect above. Our success in consistently producing knowledge that defined the global biological landscape gives us guidance for shaping the future. IUBS embarks on a comprehensive commitment, engaging in diverse initiatives to advance biology and fulfill its missions by:

(1) Fostering Global Collaboration

Our primary mission involves fostering inclusive collaborations in biology across borders and (sub)disciplines. By actively supporting research initiatives, conferences, and publications in various biological fields, we strive to advance global biological research. Additionally, we spearhead collaborative research on unified biological topics such as taxonomy, ecology, climate change, and biodiversity.

(2) Supporting Scientific Research

We sponsor and support triennial scientific programs, conferences, that foster the exchange of scientific insights. Moreover, we produce joint statements and policy briefs on critical biological topics, emphasizing our commitment to impactful research and informed policies. Our advocacy for policies promoting the contribution of biological sciences to global decisions is integral, and we actively participate in international collaborations, conferences, and symposia to address current challenges.

(3) Advancing Communication and Impact

Within our mission to advance biology, we recognize the critical role of communication and impact. By organizing widely publicized webinars relevant to the biological sciences community, we aim to facilitate meaningful dialogue, share insights, and enhance the global impact of biological research. Within our mission, we actively support the publication of scientific reports, contributing to the dissemination of knowledge.

(4) Empowering Early Career Scientists

Our mission includes a dedicated focus on early career scientists, actively involving and supporting them. We provide mentorship, networking, and resources for professional development, ensuring their meaningful participation and contribution to the global biological research landscape.

(5) Advancing Education in Biology

As part of our mission, we engage in educational initiatives to disseminate knowledge especially in relation to biodiversity and climate education. Our goal is to empower teachers, students, and individuals, with evidence-based tools for the teaching of science, ensuring a well-informed and educated community.

(6) Dialogue with Policymakers and the Society

Embedded in our mission is the active advocacy for policies promoting the contribution of biological sciences to global decisions for the public good and a healthy planet. We actively participate in international collaborations, conferences, and symposia to foster dialogue and knowledge exchange among global biological scientists, policy makers and society at large.

(7) Promoting Equity and Ethics in Biological Sciences

Integral to our mission is the implementation of initiatives to increase the representation of women and individuals from underrepresented groups. We provide scholarships, mentorship programs, and networking opportunities for diverse groups within the biological sciences community. Additionally, we aim to develop and implement a comprehensive code of conduct for individuals engaged in IUBS activities, emphasizing ethical standards and integrity.

In essence, IUBS's core mission unfolds through a tapestry of initiatives, ranging from historical milestones that laid the foundation to contemporary programs that tackle pressing global issues. IUBS's ability to produce knowledge, draft standards, and question emerging challenges underscores its role as a dynamic force in the ever-evolving field of sciences.

Instruments and Current Activities of IUBS

IUBS employs a diverse range of instruments to catalyze impactful biological research and education. Collaborative research projects, educational programs, international conferences, and strategic partnerships constitute the key instruments through which IUBS creates a dynamic platform for scientists, educators, and policymakers. By leveraging these instruments, IUBS aims to foster dialogue, share expertise, and collaborate on addressing global challenges.

Scientific Programs

At the core of our strategy is the promotion of bottom-up scientific programs with seed funding and networking. IUBS Members actively engage in suggesting triennial projects, a democratic process where proposals undergo thorough scrutiny at the General Assembly (GA) and then face the collective vote of IUBS Members. In 2023, the IUBS Members approved these four contemporary programs:

- The [Zoonotic Diseases Coordination Network](#) exemplifies the Union's proactive policy in addressing emerging global health threats. By organizing workshops, publishing special issues, and employing landscape approaches, IUBS actively contributes to the development of standards for detecting, preventing, and controlling zoonotic diseases.
- In the realm of education, the [Grand Challenge on Education on Chemical Ecology in the Anthropocene](#) project (in complement of [TROP ICSU](#) on [Climate Education](#)) signifies IUBS's

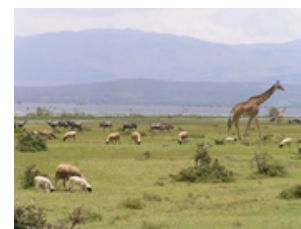


dedication to fostering knowledge dissemination on the urgent and global issue of climate change. The initiatives recognize the importance of educating early career scientists, teachers, and policymakers on the intricate connections between biology, chemistry, ecosystems, human health, human economy and climate change.

- The [Open Biodiversity and Health Big Data Initiative](#) (BHBD) demonstrates IUBS's commitment to embracing technological advancements. By developing database systems, international collaborations, and educational resources, IUBS addresses the evolving landscape of biological sciences in the era of big data and their open accessibility with the vision of Open Science.



- The initiative on [Pastoralism as a Global Herbivory Socio-Ecosystem](#) exemplifies IUBS's endeavor to comprehend complex socio-ecosystem processes. The program aims not only to quantify the global impacts of pastoralism but also to systematize sustainability indicators, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the age-old practice of livestock and human nomadism in the face of contemporary challenges.



In tandem with this grassroots approach, IUBS exhibits a dynamic top-down or bottom-up orientation in establishing new initiatives. The Executive Committee takes a proactive role in deciding on projects during the triennium, while also welcoming suggestions from IUBS Members. This dual approach ensures a balanced and inclusive portfolio of endeavors with the ability to respond immediately to emerging challenges.

Collaborative projects with other unions or organizations

IUBS has been a stalwart in promoting international collaboration in the Life Sciences. The organization's mission spans three key pillars: biological research, biological education, and the intersection of biology with society and

sustainable development. IUBS maintains partnerships with notable United Nations organizations such as UNESCO, WHO, FAO, WMO and the Secretariat of the CBD. IUBS collaborates with many other science unions and scientific societies and stakeholders.

The collaborative spirit extends beyond IUBS boundaries through engaging projects with other unions and international organizations.

- IUBS supported the creation of the **Standing Committee for Gender Equality in Science (SCGES)** and we are currently engaged in advancing this important initiative further.

- IUBS initiated the **Science Policy for Biodiversity Forum** in junction with the **Conference of Parties (COP)** of the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**. Recognizing the crucial role of biology in addressing global challenges, IUBS has actively contributed to initiatives promoting conservation and sustainability. IUBS, by organizing the Science Forum in junction with the CBD COP from 2006, has advocated for the integration of biological insights into policies and practices aimed at preserving biodiversity and ensuring a sustainable future. Presently we prepare the Science Forum for October 2024 with partners including the CBD secretariat, the Alexander-von Humboldt-Institute (Columbia), Tokyo University and the Smithsonian Institute.



- We engage in shaping the **International Decade of Science for Sustainable Development (IDSSD)** that started on January 1st, 2024. We signed the Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation, we also commented on the draft program of the Earth-Humanity Coalition, and we continue participation in the ongoing activities.

- The **Alliance against Health Risk in Wildlife Trade** stands out as a vivid example, bringing together over 100 organizations to address global health threats.

Equal Opportunities and Equity

Inclusivity takes center stage as IUBS champions early career scientists with an **Early Career Scientists Grant**. Irrespective of nationality, the organization ensures that young minds benefit

from conferences linked with IUBS activities. This commitment reflects IUBS's dedication to cultivating a diverse and vibrant scientific community.

IUBS has established a **Committee for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities**, reflecting our strong commitment to fostering diversity and inclusivity within the biological sciences community.

This committee is dedicated to implementing initiatives aimed at increasing the representation of women and individuals from underrepresented groups in biological sciences.



Science Communication

Conferences are another IUBS activity, where IUBS sponsors and supports intellectual science gatherings in member countries. This not only facilitates the exchange of scientific insights but also nurtures collaborative networks.

Scientific reports find a global audience through IUBS's support for publication, contributing to the dissemination of knowledge and enriching the international scientific discourse.

Webinars emerged as a contemporary medium, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, and IUBS embraces this by hosting its **Webinar Series** since 2020. This platform serves as a dynamic space for experts to share insights, fostering global dialogue and collaboration.

IUBS regularly informs members and stakeholders about its activities and major relevant developments by publishing the **IUBS BioNews**.

Essentially, IUBS integrates various activities, creating an interconnected network in the field of biological sciences, where each component enhances collaboration and contributes to a more comprehensive landscape.



IUBS BioNews

IUBS ORGANISATION

IUBS Governance

- **General Assembly:**

The governance of IUBS centers around the IUBS **General Assembly** (GA) held every 3 years and hosting scientific meetings. The GA elects the Executive Committee and appoints *ad hoc* committees that are working during the time of the GA such as the **Scientific Committee** that reviews the triennial programs applications and submits recommendations to the vote of the GA.

- **IUBS Executive Committee:**

The IUBS **Executive Committee** (EC), elected at the GA, oversees the implementation of scientific programs adopted at the GA, and can also establish new initiatives. The EC develops the strategies for current and future development. It is composed of the **President**, **Vice-President**, **Secretary-General**, **Treasurer**, and 6 to 8 **Executive Members**.

- **IUBS Executive Director**

The **Executive Director** manages the permanent secretariat of IUBS in Orsay, France and ensures that governance decisions are marked by democratic principles and transparency.

IUBS Membership

- **National/Ordinary Members**

IUBS membership is open to countries, territories, or regions with independent development in biological sciences. National/**Ordinary Members**, represented by their principal **scientific academy**, **research council** or **national committee**, constitute the final authority in Union governance. Ordinary Members benefit from voting rights, nominating candidates for the EC, and influencing the direction of IUBS. Becoming a National Member involves the approval by the GA.

- **Scientific Members**

Scientific Members include international societies or science bodies representing **biological disciplines** or a discipline relevant to the scientific study of biology. These members contribute to the scientific dialogue within IUBS, holding voting rights on scientific matters, and participating in the nomination of EC candidates. The admission

process for Scientific Members involves a detailed application to the EC, demonstrating the society's goals, activities, structure, and interest in IUBS.

- **Associate Members**

Associate Members from regions with less-developed biological science infrastructure, have temporary status in IUBS that is reviewed at every GA. Though they have no voting rights, Associate Members are encouraged to participate in IUBS programs and activities, fostering a sense of inclusivity. Becoming an Associate Member requires a recommendation from the EC and the GA approval. Associate Members do not pay dues.

The Benefits of IUBS Membership

Joining IUBS as a member provides numerous benefits:

- **International Collaboration:** Members engage in collaborative research activities, international conferences, and workshops, fostering a global network of scientific collaboration.

- **Capacity Building:** Members contribute to science capacity building in developing countries, ensuring a more inclusive and diverse scientific community.

- **Visibility:** Membership offers visibility for scientific societies, with opportunities to share achievements, publications, and activities through IUBS platforms.

- **Influence:** Members actively participate in governance, influencing the direction of scientific programs, conferences, and the overall IUBS strategy.

- **Access to Resources:** IUBS supports members by financing early career scientists, sponsoring meetings, and promoting the publication of reports and scientific results.

- **Networking:** Members gain access to a diverse network of scientists and organizations, enhancing opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange.

Becoming an IUBS member is not only a commitment to advancing the life sciences but also an investment in a collaborative and impactful global bio-scientific community.

IUBS ACTION PLAN 2023–2026

Advance Biology Together

"**Advance Biology Together**" is not a slogan but a commitment to inclusive collaboration. IUBS strives to foster a global community where scientists from diverse backgrounds collaborate seamlessly. Through joint projects, educational initiatives, and inclusive partnerships, IUBS aims to create a space where every voice is heard, contributing to a more equitable and robust advancement of biological sciences. In IUBS, scientists from diverse backgrounds find themselves integral to a dynamic and interconnected **network of bioscience**, where the benefits of participation extend far beyond individual research pursuits.

Being part of the IUBS community offers scientists a unique opportunity to actively shape the international biological research landscape. Through active involvement in joint projects, educational initiatives, and inclusive partnerships, members can lend their expertise to **global initiatives**, contributing to the development of innovative solutions and influencing policies on an international scale. IUBS's commitment to a bottom-up approach in its scientific programs ensures that every member has a platform to voice their concerns, propose projects, and actively participate in shaping the trajectory of biological sciences on a global scale.

IUBS provides a vehicle for members to engage in international projects, leveraging their diverse expertise to address pressing global challenges. The Union's collaborative spirit enables scientists from different biological fields, as well as other scientific disciplines, to interact and share insights. This **interdisciplinary exchange** not only enriches individual perspectives but also fosters a more holistic approach to solving complex problems our globe and humanity are facing.

Moreover, as active contributors to the IUBS community, members play a vital role in advocating for equitable access and benefit-sharing of knowledge and resources. The Union's platform becomes a conduit for their voices, ensuring that the concerns and perspectives of scientists from diverse backgrounds are

considered in the global discourse on biological sciences.

In essence, "Advance Biology Together" encapsulates the essence of IUBS membership: an opportunity for scientists to go beyond their individual research realms and actively participate in a global community that values their expertise, fosters collaboration, and collectively addresses the challenges that transcend national and discipline boundaries. Through IUBS, members find not only a platform to showcase their contributions but also a space where their collective efforts can lead to meaningful advancements in biological sciences with far-reaching global implications.

Actions for the Triennium

IUBS's action plan for the triennium 2023–2026 outlines strategic priorities and objectives to guide our endeavors. This comprehensive plan encompasses initiatives that align with our missions. By involving early career scientists, promoting diversity, engaging with policymakers, and developing impactful programs, IUBS aims to strengthen its impact and relevance in the biological sciences.

Building upon the core values and aspirations, IUBS delineates a strategic plan that aligns with the key focus areas identified as follows.

(1) Scientific Programs and Cooperation

IUBS aims to develop and implement impactful **scientific programs** in **collaboration** with international partners to address pressing biological challenges and to collaborate with organizations and institutions to increase the visibility and reach of these programs globally.

To reach these goals in the current triennium, IUBS

- ⇒ Implements the programs adopted at GA34.
- ⇒ Participates in inter-**Union activities**, e.g. IDSSD, SCGES and INQUA, also at the level of the **International Science Council** (ISC).
- ⇒ Identifies emerging topics and partners to develop new initiatives.
- ⇒ Motivates members and other stakeholders to propose activities to IUBS and to get involved in current programs.

(2) Early Career Scientists and their Involvement in IUBS

IUBS aims to increase the participation and recognition of **early career scientists** (ECS). IUBS establishes mentorship programs, networking opportunities, and provides grants, and opportunities for successful professional development of early career biologists.

To reach these goals in the current triennium, IUBS

- ⇒ Continues the **early career scientist grants**.
- ⇒ Organizes workshops for mentorship and networking for ECS.
- ⇒ Cooperates with other scientific organizations, e.g. INQUA for joint implementation of measures.
- ⇒ Structures the young scientific community inside IUBS

(3) Increase Equity and Representation

IUBS aims to implement initiatives to increase the **representation of women** and individuals from **underrepresented groups** in biological sciences

To reach these goals in the current triennium, IUBS

- ⇒ Provides **scholarships, mentorships, and networking opportunities** for diverse groups within the biological sciences community.
- ⇒ Develops and implements a comprehensive **code of conduct** for individuals engaged in IUBS activities, emphasizing ethical standards and integrity.
- ⇒ Provides guidance, and ensure adherence to **ethical principles**.
- ⇒ Implements these objectives through our **Committee for Equal Opportunity** or other IUBS activities.

(4) Dialogue with Policymakers

IUBS actively participates in international collaborations, conferences, and symposia to foster dialogue and knowledge exchange among global biological scientists.

To reach these goals in the current triennium, IUBS

- ⇒ Advocates for policies that promote the contribution of biological sciences to global **policy decisions** for the public good and a healthy planet.
- ⇒ Engages with the **CBD** and collaborating partners in the organization of the **Science**

Forum by organizing webinars and the in-person Forum in October 2024 in Cali, Columbia.

- ⇒ Fosters the dialogue and considers contributions to other stakeholders, e.g. **IPBES**.
- ⇒ Participates in **IDSSD** activities.

(5) Improved Involvement of Members

IUBS aims to ensure diverse representation in decision-making bodies within IUBS and actively seek input from members across different demographics.

IUBS establishes mechanisms for members to voice concerns, propose initiatives, and contribute to the decision-making process.

To reach these goals in the current triennium, IUBS

- ⇒ Launched the **IUBS BioNews** as Newsletter in 2023 to better communicate with its members. We also plan to prepare a questionnaire to better understand the needs of our members.
- ⇒ Organizes meetings with IUBS Ordinary Members.
- ⇒ Takes action to recruit new members
- ⇒ Discusses and eventually revise the **statutes** based on a recommendation of the last GA34.

(6) Address Global Challenges

IUBS strives for being a strong **voice of biology** and effective stakeholder in **global initiatives** addressing current challenges. This aim includes the need to identify and address new challenges and to promote **bio-based solutions**.

To reach these goals in the current triennium, IUBS

- ⇒ Contributes to the international discussion on **biodiversity** and conservation, **climate change, Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS)** and the use of **Digital Sequence Information (DSI)**.
- ⇒ Continues to develop or participates in bioscience-related **education programs** for teachers worldwide.
- ⇒ Monitors and frames the intersection of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and biology.
- ⇒ Assimilates other topics into the activity portfolio of IUBS that are identified as emerging challenges by Members or EC.

(7) Public Outreach by Online Webinars and Joint Statements:

IUBS aims to produce joint statements and **policy briefs** on critical biological topics.

IUBS promotes measures for **public outreach**.

IUBS continues organizing online **webinars** relevant to the biological sciences community.

(8) Analysis of Impact and Continuous Improvement:

IUBS aims for improving its impact and optimizing its resource allocation.

To reach these goals in the current triennium, IUBS

⇒ Plans a comprehensive analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of its activities (SWOT analysis).

⇒ Will implement strategies for continuous improvement based on the outcome of the analysis.

Conclusion: IUBS invites the global biological community to join hands in advancing biology together. Through collaboration, innovation, and a commitment to our missions, IUBS is dedicated to making meaningful contributions to the well-being of the planet and all its inhabitants, fostering a sustainable environment for the diversity of life.

Orsay (France), 2024-04-25

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