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UCT academic leads global efforts in biodiversity and ecosystem services



Professor Lynne Shannon

Photo: supplied

[Professor Lynne Shannon](#) of the University of Cape Town's (UCT) [Department of Biological Sciences](#) and [Marine and Antarctic Research Centre for Innovation and Sustainability \(UCT-MARIS\)](#) continues to make a global impact in her field. Her trailblazing contributions to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) underscore her commitment to addressing urgent biodiversity challenges and advancing sustainable development worldwide.

As a coordinating lead author in IPBES's landmark thematic assessment on transformative change, Professor Shannon has been instrumental in shaping global strategies to curb biodiversity losses and envision a sustainable future. Her work bridges science and policy

and provides critical insights for governments and stakeholders striving for equitable and effective solutions.

The IPBES platform, renowned for its leadership in biodiversity and ecosystem services, hosted its historic first-ever African Plenary in Windhoek, Namibia, in December 2024. This pivotal event brought together representatives from nearly 150 nations, marking a milestone in global efforts to combat nature's decline. Among its highlights were two ground-breaking reports: the Nexus Assessment, addressing interlinked crises in biodiversity, water, food, health, and climate change; and the Transformative Change Assessment, proposing systemic shifts for a sustainable and just world.

A Voice for Equity in Marine Conservation

With a distinguished career in marine biology and ecosystem-based management, Professor Shannon is a global champion for ocean equity. Her work reflects UCT's dedication to producing research with real-world impact.

"This (the Transformative Change) assessment deals with the urgency of transformative change to address the underlying causes of nature's decline and biodiversity loss," said Professor Shannon. "It is only through fundamental, system-wide shifts in views (our ways of thinking, knowing and seeing the world), structures (our ways of organising, regulating and governing) and practices (our ways of doing, behaving and relating) that we can begin to effectively curb biodiversity loss and nature's decline," she said.

Professor Shannon's insights emphasise the importance of collective action. "Each one of us has a role to play. Through a range of actions, from individual to organisational levels, we can co-create aspirational visions for a better future," she added.

UCT's Commitment to Global Challenges

Professor Shannon's achievements highlight UCT's leadership in addressing global environmental challenges.

"Professor Shannon's achievements highlight UCT's leadership in addressing global environmental challenges. As Africa's leading university, UCT remains committed to advancing research that informs policy, fosters collaboration, and delivers solutions for the benefit of both people and the planet," said UCT Vice-Chancellor Professor Mosa Moshabela. "Her contributions to IPBES exemplify the transformative impact of UCT research on the global stage. We are tremendously proud of her work and achievements".

Professor Shannon's work continues to inspire meaningful change, paving the way for sustainable futures where biodiversity and human well-being thrive in harmony.

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