IUCN WORLD CONSERVATION CONGRESS:
TUESDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2016

1ST SITTING OF THE MEMBER’S ASSEMBLY

The 1st Sitting of the Members’ Assembly began with an Aloha Spirit Law chanting by native Hawaiians. Opening the IUCN Members’ Assembly, IUCN President Zhang Xinsheng reminded delegates that “sustainable development is not just on paper but happens through action,” and called on members to look for “convergence of interests and to find solutions.”

Appointment and first report of the Congress Credentials Committee: IUCN President Zhang introduced the Terms of Reference (ToRs) and membership of the Committees of Congress (WCC-2016-1.1/1-Rev 1), and members voted to approve.

Adoption of the Agenda: The Congress approved the Agenda of the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2016 (WCC-2016-1.2/1 and Annex 1-Rev 1).

Appointment of the Resolutions, Finance and Audit, Governance, and Programme Committees of the Congress: IUCN President Zhang invited the Assembly to approve by vote, the ToRs of the Committees of Congress proposed by Council on the membership of the Committees of Congress (WCC-2016-1.1/1-Rev 1).

Aroha Mead, IUCN, referring to the proposed membership of the 2016 Congress Committees (WCC-2016-1.1/1-Annex 7-Rev 3), explained that the principles used for the selection include fair representation of regions; gender balance; and mix between State and NGO members. The Steering Committee of Congress, she noted, does not require a decision of the Assembly.

International Council of Environmental Law suggested inclusion of youth into the committees, and several members proposed nominations. President Zhang deferred the voting of this agenda item to allow time to consider the nominations.

In the evening, Mead reported on the Congress Committee’s suggestion to include one nominee per committee based on the nominations. The Assembly approved the ToRs and membership of committees.

Report of the Director General: IUCN Director General Inger Andersen introduced the Report (WCC-2016-1.4/1). She highlighted IUCN’s involvement in milestones, including: ensuring that environment is woven into all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); work towards the Aichi Targets; and, at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate
Change (UNFCCC), stressing the imperative of investments in adaptation and mitigation and the inclusion of Oceans in the Paris Agreement.

Responding to a question by Pakistan on resource mobilization, she noted: an end to “the days of undedicated and unrestricted funding” and the need to engage with a wide political spectrum. Replying to an inquiry by Bangladesh on staff size, she explained the decentralized structure of IUCN. To a question from Senegal on what steps IUCN was taking to create sound principles to encourage business engagement that both respects nature and promotes development, Andersen recalled the creation of the IUCN Biodiversity and Business programme.

Senegal, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Nigeria raised questions on: assessment of IUCN programs’ implementation; the accountability of IUCN members; the communication with “disadvantaged” IUCN African members; and the assessment of local communities’ involvement in programme implementation. In response, the IUCN Director General highlighted efforts undertaken by IUCN to increase the accountability and transparency of its work, including through the IUCN Union Portal launched in 2015. Responding to other questions from the floor, she observed, inter alia: no undue influence by donor countries; IUCN’s work being science-based; and that the report accurately reflects locations of previous meetings.

Report of the Council: IUCN President Zhang invited members to consider the report of the Council to the Congress (WCC-2016-1.5/1). Zhang drew attention to the Council’s major achievements, including: the smooth transition of the Secretariat leadership with appointment of Inger Andersen as director general in 2014; widespread uptake of the “one programme approach” to support delivery and impact of IUCN’s policies and programs; modernization of governance through, among others, electronic approval of Motions and voting by membership; policy guidance on critical issues such as climate change and the SDGs; and continued focus on strengthening membership service evidenced by 273 IUCN new members and six national committees since 2012.

In ensuing discussions, members and the Council interacted on issues regarding: implementation of the seven prioritized SDGs; need to reinforce further accountability and transparency, and for indicators to measure efficiency of the Council; requesting the Secretariat to increase involvement in capacity building in, technology transfer to, and mobilization of financial resources for developing countries; and the Union’s impact in the climate change agenda.

First Report of the Resolutions Committee 2 and Recording en bloc the Adoption of Motions through the Electronic Ballot Prior to Congress: Simon Stuart, Chair of the Motions Working Group introduced: the Update on Motions Process (WCC-2016-1.6/1); Communications by the Motions Working Group (WCC-2016-1.6/2 and 6/4); and Recordings of Motions adopted through electronic vote (WCC-2016-1.6/3-Rev 1). He underlined that the new way of working for IUCN’s decision-making process strengthened the fundamental democratic character by increasing transparency and the participation of IUCN members in the discussion of Motions.

Responding to questions from the floor, Stuart explained: information on participation and votes are in the public domain and thus available to anyone conducting an in-depth analysis; explanations on votes could be submitted online; data on previous debates, which took place in contact groups, is not available; the new electronic debate period provided substantially more time, with 2 months compared to previous debates which were often constrained by two-hour contact groups; and that Motions on IUCN Governance issues were also online, albeit under a separate tab.

Members then adopted, in accordance with Rule 62septimo of the Rules of Procedure of the World Conservation Congress (WCC), the IUCN WCC en bloc adoption of Motions through an electronic ballot prior to Congress.
Margaret Beckel, Chair of the Governance Committee of the Congress, introduced the Motions on IUCN governance, related to: including local and regional authorities in the structure of the Union (Motion A); including indigenous peoples organizations in the structure of the Union (Motion B); election of the IUCN President (Motion C); and enhanced practice and reforms of IUCN’s governance (Motion D). She encouraged all members to participate actively in the contact groups.

Agenda item 1.7 on the information by the Election Officer about the election procedures was deferred until Wednesday.

Information about the purpose and process of the Hawai‘i Commitments: Maria von Weissenberg, Finland, chaired this session. John Robinson, IUCN, explained that the Hawai‘i Commitments theme, “Navigating Island Earth,” is inspired by the Polynesian around-the-world voyaging canoe Mālama Honua, which translates as “to care for our Island Earth.” He explained that the declaration drafting subcommittee would provide a draft for comments, adding that it would not be a negotiated text.

2nd SITTING OF THE MEMBER’S ASSEMBLY

Presentation of the Draft IUCN Programme 2017-2020: Director General Andersen introduced the IUCN Programme 2017-2020 (WCC-2016-2.1/1-Annex 1), reminding members that “we all need to see ourselves in this programme.”

Cyriaque N. Sendashonga, IUCN Global Director of Policy and Programme Group, highlighted IUCN’s inter-sessional achievements between 2013-2016, including: elevating the role of nature in international frameworks; progressing on mainstreaming and implementing nature-based solutions – such as through the Bonn Challenge and through representation of ecosystems as important element in 45 nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement; scaling up investments in conservation and getting accredited at the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Global Climate Fund (GCF); and establishing knowledge through many publications.

Sendashonga underscored that the 2017-2020 programme adds more focus on the SDGs and scales up efforts on: valuing and conserving nature; promoting and supporting effective and equitable governance of natural resources; and deploying nature-based solutions to address societal challenges.

Presentation of the IUCN Financial Plan 2017–2020: Andersen presented the context of IUCN’s Financial Plan noting: a reprioritization of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) because of the European migration crisis; a decline in IUCN’s unrestricted funding; and a “healthy growth” in project funding, majority of which comes from governments and multilateral institutions. Michael Davis, IUCN, presented the objectives of the Financial Plan, which include: funding the implementation of the 2017-2020 Programme; growing IUCN’s project portfolio; regional and programmatic approaches; and the “One Programme” approach, with increased grant-making and joint implementation with members. He announced that IUCN’s unrestricted funding for 2017-2020 is US$ 115 million and restricted funding being US$ 462 million. He also noted increased IUCN membership, especially in the NGOs category, with forecast of further growth.

Discussion of issues of strategic importance for the Union: Director General Andersen said, in response to the request by members to engage in issues of strategic importance during the Assembly, the Council has decided on three strategic themes, namely: agriculture and biodiversity; oceans and islands; and building constituencies.

How should IUCN address the challenge of conserving nature in the face of industrial agriculture: Delivering the keynote address, Ruth Richardson, Global Alliance For The Future of Food, quoted Wendell Berry in the ‘Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture’, “the soil is the great connector of lives, the source and destination of all,” further emphasizing that food systems are connected to diverse issues affecting individual livelihoods.

Alexander Müller, TEEB for Agriculture and Food, highlighted strategic opportunities for IUCN as knowledge hub to contribute to changing food production patterns to eradicate poverty within ecological limits, and to support a comprehensive assessment of the food chain.

Jeffrey Sachs, Columbia University Earth Institute, lamented a lack of metrics and quantifications “when it comes to the biodiversity-ecosystems-agriculture interface” and proposed IUCN lead the way for the analytical work “urgently needed,” moving toward making plans of action.

Jason Clay, WWF US, called for: planetary metrics; focus on transitioning the “worst food producers” towards sustainable agriculture; and moving funding away from “business-as-usual crop production methods” to “unusual innovative methods that reintegrate underperforming land.”
In the ensuing discussion, IUCN members and partners also addressed issues including: whether conserving nature is fundamentally incompatible with industrial agriculture; the importance of sustainable consumption; and reasons why public investment in sustainable agriculture is dwindling, while industrialized agriculture invests in agrosystems that ruin ecosystems; and the need for roadmaps for sustainable agriculture.

How should IUCN address the challenge of preserving the health of the world’s oceans: Lauren Wenzel, NOOA, moderated the first panel noting that the “plastic economy” is gravely affecting the health of our oceans. Panelists responded to questions from members.

Pierre Cousteau, Cousteau Divers, said single use plastics should be banned and that the product designs of most plastics is a deterrent to recycling. Birguy Lamizana-Diallo, UNEP, said a global agenda on plastics would give national governments mandates to act on regulating their use.

Jeroen Dagevos, Utrecht University, said campaigns such as those against microplastics in cosmetics have potential to produce change in the business sector.

Sylvia Earle, Oceanographer, moderating the second panel called for “putting live-value of wildlife on the balance sheet”. She stressed the need for large marine protected areas, as “safe havens for ocean wildlife.” Nilufer Oral, Co-chair of the Ocean Specialist Group of the World Commission on Environmental Law, called for utilizing IUCN’s strong network of legal experts to influence the prevention of illegal fishing, with its negative economic, social and environmental consequences.

Serge Garcia, Chair of the Fisheries Expert Group of the Commission on Ecosystem Management described efforts to accelerate the implementation of the ecosystem service approach and to foster collaboration among governmental and intergovernmental agencies, such as the CBD, FAO and IUCN.

Sebastian Troëng, Conservation International, Colombia agreed with the importance of looking for solutions with a lens combining economic, social and environmental knowledge. He also called for scaling up solutions by creating enabling conditions and demand for solutions.

By sharing experiences from his sailing voyage around the world, Nainoa Thompson inspired participants to protect “culture, oceans and the island earth - because our lives depend on it.”

3RD SITTING – AWARDS CEREMONY

In the evening, President Zhang presided over the awards ceremony.

The laureate of the John C. Phillips Memorial Medal went to Maria Teresa Jorge Pádua, Brazil, for outstanding service in international conservation. The Harold Jefferson Coolidge Memorial Medal went to Lee M. Talbot, the US, for outstanding contribution in conservation of nature and natural resources. Ashok Khosla, India and Valli Moosa, South Africa, received the Honorary Membership of IUCN Awards.

IUCN Commissions also presented the: Peter Scott Medal and George Rabb Award for Conservation Innovation; Kenton Miller Award for Innovation in Protected Areas Management; Luc Hoffmann Award and the Young Professional Award; Award for Spanish-language environmental education materials on climate change; International Brandwein Medal for lifelong commitment to conservation education; Chair’s Award for lifelong commitment to Commission on Education and Communication; Young Professional Award; Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy (CEESP) Award for Meritorious Research; CEESP Award for an Indigenous IUCN Member Organization and the CEESP Gender Award.