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## IUCN World Conservation Congress Highlights: Friday, 10 October 2025

The conservation of nature requires engaging diverse voices and stakeholders—from those on the frontlines of nature’s decline, such as Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and youth, to those with the capacity to contribute financial resources and technological capabilities.

On Friday, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress continued to platform these voices across its Forums, Exhibitions, and Summits. By embracing a widening circle of stakeholders, the Congress reinforces the urgency of collective action. Discussions on the second day provided a space for conservation sessions featuring the youth, for business and industry to recognize their dependence on healthy ecosystems, and for knowledge co-sharing through dialogues, trainings, debates, and speaker pitches.

### High-level Dialogues

**Nature is Everyone’s Business: Mobilizing Capital for Biodiversity and Resilience:** This High-level Dialogue opened the [Business Summit](#) by bringing together global decision-makers to share how they are unlocking new opportunities for investments in nature. Becky Anderson, CNN Abu Dhabi, moderated.

In a keynote address, Razan Al Mubarak, President, IUCN, offered four “headlines” to guide the Dialogue: materiality, dependency, reputation, and opportunity. She said the cost of biodiversity loss is no longer abstract but unfolding “here and now,” disrupting supply chains, and posing significant risks to business. She further noted the latter’s dependence on nature, acknowledging that ecosystem decline affects business resilience and growth. She stressed the intrinsic value of nature and urged the private sector to drive innovation to tackle pressing issues at scale.

Humphrey Kariuki, Founder, Janus Continental Group, highlighted that Africa holds one quarter of the world’s biodiversity and more than one third of species, yet is one of the most underfunded conservation regions. He emphasized that “to invest in Africa is to invest in the Earth,” and outlined his vision for Africa to take the lead in shaping conservation at a global level.

The panel discussion focused on: how innovative finance can scale biodiversity; how to support the business case for nature; the power of philanthropic and catalytic capital to overcome risk; and ways to support sustainability investments.

Kazuhiko Kamada, Chief Strategy Officer, Oji Holdings Corporation, highlighted his company’s work to create value-added products from their 635,000 hectares of forest, such as producing bioethanol from wood to support decarbonization in the aviation industry. He also shared experiences in monitoring and collecting data to manage forests in a nature-positive way.

Laurence Pessez, Global Chief Sustainability Officer, BNP Paribas, stressed the importance of verifiable, science-based, measurable, and auditable metrics to address investor uncertainty. She noted that regulations are a strong incentive to make businesses act and underscored the need to involve local stakeholders from the onset to ensure that project benefits accrue to affected communities.

Camille Rivera, Oceanus Conservation, reflected on the effects of biodiversity loss on communities in the Philippines. She highlighted the [Blue Carbon Programme](#), which supports the reforestation of abandoned fishponds to support biodiversity and community livelihoods. She emphasized the need to channel finance to collect data in conservation areas, specifically noting the importance of building capacity within local communities.



IUCN President **Razan Al Mubarak** during the event memorializing the late Jane Goodall



Humphrey Kariuki, Founder, Janus Continental Group

**Safeguarding Life: The Power of Biodiversity:** This High-level Dialogue opened with a keynote address by Grethel Aguilar, Director General, IUCN, where she stressed the Congress's role in building the "house of the Union" and argued that solutions to environmental crises must address economic, social, and cultural inequalities.

In the discussion, moderated by Achim Steiner, former UN Development Programme Administrator, David Obura, Chair, Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), underscored interlinkages and holistic thinking. He cited carbon sequestration as an example where a single-sector approach could cause negative side-effects while governance models that address interconnected issues could deliver co-benefits.

Alessandra Yupanqui, Co-Founder and Editor-in-Chief, Sapiens, criticized the dominant modern conception of the divisive human-nature relationship, citing high rates of depression and anxiety in cities such as New York, Tokyo, and Singapore as a subsequent effect of alienation from nature. Championing Indigenous science and "cosmo-visions" as alternatives, she reflected on her journey as an Indigenous migrant and the importance of communication channels to express such perspectives and knowledge. Yupanqui also

highlighted the role of the Indigenous defenders who "put their bodies on the line" and "are dying of mercury and oil pollution."

Rohitesh Dhawan, President and CEO, International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM), stressed the crucial role of minerals such as lithium, cobalt, and nickel in reaching nature and climate goals but acknowledged the need to "mine differently." He referred to the voluntary [ICMM Mining Principles](#) as a more sustainable approach to protect people and the environment. Pressed by Moderator Steiner on the current private sector backlash against such policies, he said: "We could have easily turned our backs on our commitments, but we have not done so." Acknowledging the harm done by the mining industry to Indigenous Peoples, he committed to respect the principle of free, prior, and informed consent.

**A Tribute to Jane Goodall:** This High-level Dialogue, co-hosted by the Jane Goodall Institute and IUCN, gave attendees the opportunity to celebrate the work and legacy of Jane Goodall. The session was moderated by Ian Stewart, IUCN Secretariat.

Lilian Pintea, Jane Goodall Institute, recalled Goodall's deep connection to her team at the Institute and her groundbreaking research into chimpanzee behavior. He stressed that, unless we help people make a living without destroying the environment, we cannot protect nature.

IUCN Director General Grethel Aguilar celebrated Goodall as "having changed the way humanity sees itself in relation to the natural world," remembering that Goodall "rewrote the story" of what it means to be part of nature. She urged attendees to carry forward the message that together we can build a world where people and nature thrive as one.

Characterizing Goodall as "one of the most well-known scientists in the world," Russell Mittermeier, Chair of the IUCN Species Survival Commission, Primate Specialist Group, praised her for having opened the door for women in field research.

IUCN President Razan Al Mubarak, shared four lessons from Goodall, calling on attendees to "live" every moment, "love" unconditionally, "laugh," and "give" of your time, knowledge, and experience. By giving so much herself, Mubarak said, Goodall gave us all hope.



Kazuhiko Kamada, Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer, Oji Holdings Corporation



Camille Rivera, Oceanus Conservation



Alessandra Yupanqui, Co-Founder & Editor-in-Chief, Sapiens

Alice Macharia, Jane Goodall Institute, memorialized Goodall as a “whisperer of nature” and lauded her work on community-led conservation. Tara Golshan, Education Roots and Shoots, United Arab Emirates (UAE), affirmed [Roots & Shoots](#) as Goodall’s legacy focused on youth, noting that this movement is active in over 70 countries worldwide.

### High-Level Events

**Launch of the Updated Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions:** This High-level event launched the [updated IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions](#) (NbS), strengthening the science-based practical framework for designing, implementing, and measuring effective NbS activities. Susanne Pedersen, Director, IUCN Center for Science and Knowledge, moderated.

In her keynote speech, IUCN Director General Aguilar welcomed the revised Standard as a “renewed commitment to transformation.” She stressed the its role in supporting different actors to scale up credible, measurable, and impactful solutions, harmonizing the three Rio Conventions and guarding against greenwashing.

Marie Bjornson-Langen, French Development Agency (AFD), described the Standard as a common reference to increase the credibility of NbS to attract investors and mobilize new funding.

Yoko Watanabe, Asian Development Bank, underlined the establishment of the [Nature Solutions Finance Hub](#) with key partners including AFD and the OPEC Fund for International Development.

Musonda Mumba, Secretary General, Convention on Wetlands, reminded delegates that NbS touch upon territorial issues such as land tenure and rights.

Angela Andrade, Chair, IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management, presented the updated Standard. She recalled the drafting process, highlighting the many actors involved and drawing attention to the evolved institutional environment, with NbS being taken up in new political contexts such as the UN Environment Assembly and the CBD. Acknowledging challenges and negative side effects encountered in implementing the 2020 version of the Global Standard for NbS, she outlined several

innovations, including: greater attention to systems thinking; improved clarity and utility, including an improved self-assessment tool; stronger emphasis on rights and equity; and a new governance structure, including a greater role for regional and national NbS hubs.

In the ensuing panel discussion, Olivier Rukundo, Head, Peoples and Biodiversity Unit, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Secretariat, outlined the role of NbS in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). Claudine Blamey, Chief Sustainability Officer, Aviva, said the updated Standard provided confidence to investors and markets and called for embedding NbS in infrastructural policies and land frameworks. In remarks mirrored by Bjornson-Langen and Watanabe, she underscored the need for establishing clear rules on registration, compliance, and enforcement through a strong governance framework.

Discussions also touched upon: the importance of shifting from global to national levels in the implementation of NbS; better integration of NbS across different processes and sectors; and turning the Standard into investment pipelines that deliver impacts for people and planet.

### Selected Thematic Sessions

**Scaling Up Resilient Conservation and Protected Areas in Arid and Hyper-Arid Regions:** Abdallah Altasat, National Center for Wildlife (NCW), Saudi Arabia, introduced this thematic session, which took the form of a structured debate. Robert Muir, NCW, presented the three premises under debate, focusing on ambition, systems, and governance, respectively. Filippo Maria Carli, IUCN Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA), moderated.

The first debate considered whether quantitative targets matter more for achieving lasting national conservation impacts than goals focused on ecological function or governance. James Hardcastle, Protected and Conserved Areas, IUCN, argued that percentages are the common language of ambition and should be a guide to framing the scale of the problem. Mohammed Shobrak, NCW, countered that conserving entire habitats matters more than amorphous percentages. Salwa Elhalawani, FTI



Lilian Pintea, Jane Goodall Institute

Consulting, Saudi Arabia, highlighted the importance of bottom-up, community-centered approaches, stressing that “resilience is built not in hectares, but in institutions and societies.”

The second debate discussed whether restoration outcomes depend more on species reintroductions and protection than on ecosystem function or community benefits. Philip Seddon, University of Otago, argued that flagship species ignite momentum, investment, and visibility. Mohammed Darwish, NCW, stressed that true restoration starts with rebuilding ecological foundations, not reintroducing species prematurely into protected areas. IUCN ROWA’s Chiekh Mohamedou emphasized that restoration endures “only when people and ecosystems thrive together.”

In the third debate, participants considered whether protected areas could endure without national development priorities integrated into planning processes. Benjamin Lee, Royal Commission for AIUla, argued that protected areas are frontline tools to address climate change and biodiversity loss. Sue Stolton, Equilibrium Research, addressed effectiveness and values, stressing that success is defined by outcomes, not values. She underlined that governance action is always an exercise in compromise and should be guided by standard-setting value systems, such as the [IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas](#).

**Achieving Conservation and Socio-Economic Benefits from Managing Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in Freshwater Ecosystems:** This thematic session, organized in a World Café format, was opened by Kevin Smith, Head of Programme, Invasive Species and Wildlife Health, IUCN. The session highlighted priorities and effective solutions for IAS eradication in freshwater ecosystems.

Piero Genovesi, Chair, IUCN Species Survival Commission, Invasive Species Specialist Group, lamented the global decline of freshwater fauna by 85%, IAS having affected 60% of global extinctions. Placing the annual cost at EUR 400 billion, he underscored that IAS significantly impact livelihoods, health, economies, and cultural identities’ worldwide. He reiterated the effectiveness of IAS management as a conservation tool and the availability of effective practices, in line with Target 6 of the GBF.

Ana Nunes, IUCN Invasive Species Programme, introduced the World Café session centred around the four aspects of IAS management: freshwater eradications; community-based management; national policies; and holistic approaches. The groups were facilitated by Joshua Klemm, Executive Director, International Rivers; Muhammad Iqram, Founder and Co-Director, Tapak Diversitas Hayati Nusantara; Victoria Lichtschein, Executive Director, Fundación Biodiversidad Argentina; and Guillaume Gigot, French Biodiversity Agency, who also summarized the discussions.

The groups called for, among others, involving Indigenous Peoples and using traditional knowledge in IAS management planning. They stressed the importance of national strategies



**Manal Awad Mikhail**, Minister of Local Development & Acting Minister of Environment, Egypt

and legislation to prioritize and manage IAS eradication, while underlining bottom-up, locally based policies, and combining technology with community-based conservation. The groups also advocated for increased financial resources, early warning systems, and public awareness.

**ENACT Partnership Stories from the Ground: What do Successful and Unsuccessful Nature-based Solutions Look Like?** This cross-cutting thematic session focused on reducing climate overshoot risks and scaling up resilience conservation action by examining the transformational potential of NbS. Sandeep Sengupta, Global Policy Lead on Climate Change, IUCN, moderated. The session began with a High-level Segment, followed by two expert panels.

Manal Awad Mikhail, Acting Minister of Environment, Egypt, noted her country’s efforts to support NbS policies and strategies, including the North Coast Climate Adaptation Project, which has sought to protect green spaces threatened by Nile River flooding.

Oliver Conz, Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany, stated that NbS are “the cornerstone of global climate ambitions,” highlighting their power as a unifying tool to address both the climate and biodiversity crises.

Hambardzum Matevosyan, Minister of the Environment, Armenia, emphasized his country’s commitment to advancing NbS, noting that they will be hosting the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the CBD in 2026, underlining that NbS will be a central theme.

Stewart Maginnis, Deputy Director General, IUCN, stressed the “real need for a systems-wide shift” to reduce sectoral siloing and support transformative NbS strategies. He shared a preview of the IUCN’s revised Global Standard for NbS.

Kerry Max, Global Affairs, Canada, noted some challenges facing NbS, including capacity building, diverging interests among stakeholders, supply chain limitations, and monitoring and reporting requirements. Angela Andrade, Chair, IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management, said that NbS need to enhance and promote ecological integrity, stressing that only addressing one ecosystem service may create harmful trade-offs.



**Liette Vasseur**, Deputy Chair, IUCN Commission of Ecosystem Management

Alfredo Daniel Redondo, Climate Champions Team, reflected on his Team's work to support the UN Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP 30 Presidency in Brazil, including supporting existing NbS initiatives associated with the Global Climate Action Agenda. Atsuhiko Yoshinaka, Rakuno Gakuen University, shared how NbS have been applied in Japan, pointing to the Yamagawa Sea Cradle Blue Carbon Project, which has sought to restore eelgrass beds to revive local fisheries, yielding over JPY 200 million per hectare per year in value.

Melissa De Kock, Deputy Director, UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre, emphasized the need to get the foundations of NbS right. She noted that doing so requires co-creation, clear definitions, and understanding the trade-offs and outcomes, as well as who bears the cost of, and who gains from, NbS.

Jun Hashimoto, Shimizu Corporation, reflected on construction companies' responsibility to support NbS, and shared an example of her firm's biodome project established to support biodiversity and education for employees, local youth, and the broader community.

Liette Vasseur, Deputy Chair, IUCN Commission of Ecosystem Management, called to engage communities in NbS project from the onset. She said that NbS need to be transparent, accountable, and supportive of social learning.

### **Speaker Pitch: Conservation Showcase**

**Oceans of Opportunity: Technology and Youth Driving Marine Conservation:** This speaker pitch showcased the [Swatch of No Ground Marine Protected Area](#) (MPA), where innovative solutions have helped advance marine conservation.

The session aligned with the IUCN Congress theme, "scaling up resilient conservation action," by showcasing technologies for species monitoring and strengthening data-driven decision-making for conservation measures.

Dorothea Theunissen, GIZ, shared the importance of the Swatch of No Ground MPA, a biodiversity hotspot that serves as a habitat for marine megafauna and vital feeding, as well as a breeding grounds, and migration corridor for cetaceans and

fish. Highlighting the challenges with conservation measures, including limited access to biodiversity and oceanographic data, she suggested bridging data gaps through innovation, such as satellite tagging, DNA barcoding, and youth-led research.

ABM Sarowar Alam, IUCN Bangladesh, presented the results of research on marine turtle and salt-water crocodiles movement using a satellite telemetry study.

He noted that the results informed respective government action, such as the management of wild and captive-bred crocodiles. In the ensuing discussion, participants engaged in dialogue about community involvement, translating scientific research into actionable goals, and empowering youth in ocean stewardship.

### **Learning Zone: Deep Dive**

**Governance of the Ocean: Understanding the High Seas Treaty (BBNJ):** This deep dive session offered participants a first glimpse into IUCN's forthcoming Explanatory Guide to the Agreement under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (the BBNJ Agreement). Alejandro Iza, Director, Environmental Law Centre, IUCN Secretariat, moderated the session.

Odile Conchou, AFD, highlighted the importance of financial support for the preparation of guides and trainings that support technical assistance and capacity building.

Heidi Weiskel, Global Ocean Team, IUCN, stressed that there are lessons to be learned from existing MPAs in implementing area-based management tools under the High Seas Treaty, citing the Ross Sea Region MPA and its upcoming review in 2027 as an example.

Commenting on the Agreement's upcoming entry into force in January 2026, Minna Epps, Global Marine and Polar Programme, IUCN Secretariat, noted that political support will be crucial to maintain the momentum and move towards implementation.

Jimpson Dávila Ordoñez, Peruvian Society for Environmental Law, highlighted that the Treaty heralds a structural change in biodiversity conservation beyond national jurisdiction, and underscored the importance of building capacities and including all stakeholders in decision making processes, citing artisanal fishermen in particular.

Panelists then engaged participants in discussing, among others: impacts on regional fisheries management organizations; traditional ecological knowledge; and the future of the BBNJ COPs.

Kristina Gjerde, Senior High Seas Advisor, IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law 2021-2025, reminded participants that there is still much work to be done. Christina Voigt, Chair, IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law, called on parties to "breathe life into this vital agreement."