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## IUCN World Conservation Congress Highlights: Tuesday, 14 October 2025

On the penultimate day of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) 2025 World Conservation Congress, Members considered activities undertaken by IUCN's seven Expert Commissions in the past quadrennium and made suggestions for future work. They also approved the Union's financial statements for 2021–2024 and its Financial Plan for 2026–2029 and considered a range of governance-related and substantive motions.

### Fifth Sitting

IUCN President Al Mubarak announced the adoption of motions voted on Monday related to:

- the protection of mesopelagic ecosystem integrity;
- advancing an ethical human-ocean relationship;
- recognizing and supporting community stewardship of natural resources through dedicated funding;
- addressing the direct exploitation of wild species; and
- protecting ecosystems and riverine communities from the impacts of hydropower in the Lower Congo and globally.

**Commissions' Reports:** Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) Chair Angela Andrade presented the Commission's report ([CGR-2025-3.2-1 Annex 3](#)), showcasing the CEM's work and achievements during the past four years on, among others: work of CEM task forces on biodiversity and climate change and increased visibility in high-level events. She drew attention to the CEM's latest knowledge products, including

the first [Red List of Ecosystem assessment of tropical glacier ecosystem](#), the second [Global Nature-based Solution Standard](#), and the [Guidelines for Rewilding](#).

FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL, Mexico, noted that most of the reports focused on conceptual development and underscored the importance of applying these concepts in the real world.

**Species Survival Commission's (SSC) report:** Presenting the Commission's report ([CGR-2025-6.1-1 Annex 1](#)), SSC Chair Jon Paul Rodríguez highlighted the SSC's achievements, including: publications such as the [Commission's First Annual Report](#); the development of an open-access data visualization tool; and the creation of national species specialist groups.

WILDLIFE DIRECT KENYA lauded Rodríguez for increasing engagement in Africa. BAHRAIN WOMEN ASSOCIATION - FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT raised a concern that there are significantly fewer Centers for Species Survival in the Africa and Asia regions.

**World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL) Chair** Christina Voigt presented WCEL's report ([CGR-2025-6.1-1 Annex 2](#)) and highlighted the Commission's close involvement in advisory proceedings on climate change at the International Court of Justice, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, as well as in multilateral processes such as the High Seas Treaty, the negotiations towards a global plastics treaty, and the climate meetings.

Several Members from developing countries stressed difficulties in enforcing environmental laws and court orders and



A view of the room during the Sixth Sitting

asked the Commission to strengthen its efforts to build capacities among lawyers and the judiciary. CENTRO MEXICANO DE DERECHO AMBIENTAL urged greater attention to the threats faced by environmental defenders “who are giving everything, including their lives.” ASOCIACIÓN INTERÉTNICA DE DESARROLLO DE LA SELVA PERUANA highlighted the need to implement the Minamata Convention on Mercury and to defend Indigenous Peoples living in voluntary isolation. FINLAND underlined the pressing need for a global plastics treaty that addresses the entire lifecycle of plastics. WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE PAKISTAN called for WCEL to develop a scoreboard or state of enforcement report to support civil society’s efforts to enforce environmental regulations. MALI said conservation of nature is a prerequisite for sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Interim **Climate Action Commission (CAC)** Chair Manuel Pulgar-Vidal presented the CAC report ([CGR-2025-3.2-1 Annex 1](#)). He recounted the four CAC thematic areas: policy and climate justice; solutions and innovative approaches; finance; and climate and nature, and CAC involvement in different multilateral frameworks. In the second part of the presentation, Brendan Mackey, Member of CAC Steering Committee, termed the current climate treaty framework “biodiversity-blind,” and pointed to CAC’s expanded focus on synergies between nature and climate action.

SAVE ENVIRONMENT AND PEOPLE AGENCY lamented that climate finance does not always reach frontline communities. In response to a query by UNNAYAN ONNESHAN, Pulgar-Vidal considered CAC’s added value compared to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in connecting science with economy and people, while Mackey agreed with the request for CAC to increasingly engage the climate vulnerable networks. RESERVA: THE YOUTH LAND TRUST called for increased inclusion of youth as co-designers of sustainable solutions to ensure intergenerational justice.

**World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)** Chair Madhu Rao presented the Commission’s quadrennial report ([CGR-2025-6.1-1 Annex 3](#)), highlighting the core focus of advancing effective area-based conservation within global biodiversity policies, specifically Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

KUWAIT INSTITUTE FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH suggested including a youth member in each commission. GABON called on strengthening strategic partnerships for local action, highlighting the protection of the Congo Basin. UGANDA appreciated the recognition of rangers and, with CAMEROON WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY, stressing that focus should be on the effective management of protected areas. THE WILDLIFE TRUSTS highlighted the unique value and particular challenges faced by small reserves in connecting people with nature. HUSTAI NATIONAL PARK drew attention to protected areas in Mongolia managed independently by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), demonstrating that protected areas can be managed on behalf of the state.

CENTRO DE CONSERVACIÓN, INVESTIGACIÓN Y MANEJO DE AREAS NATURALES underscored the importance of maintaining the diverse categories of protected areas. SPRINGS STEWARDSHIP INSTITUTE noted that underrepresented ecosystems, such as springs, should be included in protection strategies. INTERNATIONAL INDIAN TREATY COUNCIL and ASOCIACIÓN INTERÉTNICA DE DESARROLLO DE LA SELVA PERUANA highlighted the importance of including Indigenous Peoples in discussions and decision on protected areas.

**Adoption of Commission Mandates:** WCPA Chair Rao recalled progress made in a contact group to revise the CAC’s mandate and Motion 121 (confirming the status of the Climate Action Commission) and reported that consensus had been reached. Members endorsed the Commission mandates.

### **Sixth Sitting**

**Financial Reports:** IUCN Director General Grethel Aguilar introduced the report of the Director General on the finances of IUCN for the period 2021–2024 ([CGR-2025-6.3-1](#)). She highlighted that the total project portfolio has increased from CHF 800 million in 2021 to CHF 1.2 billion in 2024 and noted increased reserves. Louisa Chaubert, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), IUCN Secretariat, presented the financial statements ([CGR-2025-6.3-1 Annex 1](#)), specifically highlighting an increase in project income.

Nihal Welikala, IUCN Treasurer, introduced the **Report of the Treasurer** ([CGR-2025-6.4-1](#)) and noted that the long-



A view of the panel during the Sixth Assembly



Participants listen to the deliberations.

term funding prospects are being eroded by geopolitical headwinds such as increased national defense spending and aging populations. Warning that the traditional funding model can no longer be taken for granted, he outlined five challenges: increasing unrestricted funds; increasing project cost recovery; managing costs optimally by achieving a balance between covering operational expenses and investing to see growth; managing risks inherent in the large portfolio; and building reserves and liquidity.

**Report of the Congress Finance and Audit Committee:**

Rick Bates, Chair, Finance and Audit Committee, invited the Congress to approve the audited financial statements. VOICE OF PAKISTAN queried what “framework funds” refer to, which CFO Chaubert clarified meant core funding provided by some governments. BAHRAIN WOMEN ASSOCIATION – FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT asked why liabilities did not fall in 2021 due to the pandemic, to which the CFO Chaubert replied that liabilities are owed at a specified date and are not necessarily subject to external conditions.

Various civil society Members reported difficulties in paying membership fees due to national currency devaluation vis-à-vis the Swiss Franc or the US Dollar and the unfair international financial system and asked to consider revising fees. ASOCIACIÓN GUYRA asked IUCN to invest in the sustainability of operations and reduce overhead costs. Following a vote, Members approved the financial reports.

**Draft IUCN Financial Plan 2026–2029:** Chaubert, CFO, IUCN Secretariat, introduced the Draft IUCN Financial Plan 2026-2029 ([CGR-2025-6.7-1 Annex 1](#)). She noted that while income and surplus are projected to increase and unrestricted expenditure to remain relatively stable, the level of income growth will slow down in line with reductions in international aid.

In response to a query from AWAZ FOUNDATION PAKISTAN: CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT SERVICES, Director General Aguilar clarified that expected income growth from membership fees is not due to increased fee levels but to increased membership, particularly Indigenous organizations and subnational governments. Addressing CROSS RIVER STATE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, Director General Aguilar explained investments aim to replace outdated financial management technology to increase the efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency of the Secretariat. ALL-RUSSIAN SOCIETY OF NATURE PROTECTION urged the Secretariat to support Members in approaching donors otherwise inaccessible to them. Responding to THE WILDLIFE TRUSTS Aguilar stressed that membership fee levels are approved by Members and reinvested through the various Secretariat services provided to Members. In a vote, Members endorsed the IUCN Financial Plan 2026–2029.

**Report of the Congress Governance Committee:** Vivek Menon, Chair, Congress Governance Committee, presented the remaining motions on governance (Motions C and D). He noted that [Motion C](#) on amendments to IUCN statutes and regulations had four distinct proposals:

- adopting the objectives of IUCN in line with the Union’s 20-year Strategic Vision;
- strengthening the alignment of IUCN Statutes with Swiss law;

- clarifying the nomination and election procedures, and guidance about campaign activities, among others;
- establishing an appeals process against definitive decisions of the Election officer.

Members engaged in a lengthy discussion on a proposal referring to the constitution of a quorum for amendments to the statutes through electronic votes between sessions of the Congress. FRANCE highlighted the amendment’s importance, noting that changing the fundamental rules of the Union should require the participation and vote of a sufficient number of Members.

Considering outstanding concerns, Session Chair Peter Cochrane, IUCN, Vice President, gave Members more time to consider this proposed amendment. Voting opened for the rest of Motion C, with Members approving all the motions, except that on quorum.

Menon then discussed [Motion D](#), on the introduction of a membership dues’ waiver mechanism for Members facing exceptional financial hardship. He explained that *force majeure* conditions under this amendment would include disasters, armed conflicts, severe economic crisis, and pandemics, and called on Members to vote on text adding “international sanctions” to the list of conditions.

CENTRO MEXICANO DE DERECHO AMBIENTAL called for clarification on what constitutes a “severe economic crisis.” IUCN REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR NORTH AFRICA opined that the *force majeure* conditions would need to be registered by an entire country or region for a dues’ waiver to be considered.

Sandrine Friedli Cela, Head of Legal, IUCN, noted that dues’ waiver applications would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and explained that *force majeure* are instances beyond the control of the Members. A Member from Cameroon underlined the need to clearly define the criteria for dues’ waivers, emphasizing that examining each case may become an overwhelming task.

PAKISTAN inquired whether recognizing international sanctions would affect an NGO in a country facing long-term sanctions. A Member from Iran underlined the importance of including sanctions as a condition for dues waivers. Members from the Russian Federation stressed that international sanctions affect access to funding for NGOs, which affects payment of



**Marina Silva**, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Brazil, receives the John C. Phillips Memorial Medal.

dues, and, with SENEGAL, underlined the need to support Members in difficult circumstances.

A Member from New Zealand, speaking via the online platform, proposed rewording the amendment to “compelling circumstances.”

TUNISIA called for an explanation from the amendment’s proponent. The proponent, FRANCE, explained that international sanctions are legally not a case of *force majeure*. UKRAINE called to delete international sanctions, stressing that including international sanctions in this list would go against international law.

Several Members proposed rewording the amendment, noting that dues should not be waived for Category A members facing international sanctions. Members will review the revised amendment on Wednesday.

**Progress Report of the Resolutions Committee and Discussion and Vote on Motions:** Members considered, voted on and approved motions:

- 32 (protecting seamounts and vulnerable marine ecosystems from destructive practices);
- 59 (advancing actions to end plastic pollution to protect human health, biodiversity, and the environment);
- 73 (defining a robust nature positive for business framework, to mobilize corporate, civil society and government support for high-integrity, nature positive contributions, aligned with the GBF);
- 84 (developing a circular and sustainable bioeconomy for sustainable food and agriculture);
- 107 (scaling-up Indigenous leadership in the protection of nature and the sacred);
- 143 (developing an IUCN policy and guidance on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and conservation, and the integrity of digital evidence);
- 145 (reaffirming IUCN’s commitment to multilateralism and global cooperation); and
- 148 (supporting the recovery and restoration of Lebanon’s war-impacted ecosystems).

Rodríguez explained the process of drafting motion 87 (IUCN policy on synthetic biology in relation to nature conservation)

and noted that Members had also presented motion 133 (a moratorium on genetically engineering wild species in natural ecosystems). He explained that the contact groups had discussed reconciling the motions but had decided against doing this, preferring to discuss them as discrete motions.

GERMANY requested withdrawing motion 87 from the table until the text of motion 133 was available to Members. Following a lengthy discussion, Session Chair Cochrane ruled to proceed with presenting the motion. Challenged by some Members, the ruling was put to a vote. Members voted to agree with the ruling of the Chair and proceeded with tabling motion 87. Two amendments for the motion were considered. The first amendment, which failed in a vote, considered additional text to the preamble, while the second amendment, which Members approved, focused on the second operative paragraph. Members voted in favor of the entire motion.

### Seventh Sitting

**Awards Ceremony:** The IUCN Awards Ceremony was conducted by Sean Southey, Commission on Education and Communication Chair. Awards’ Jury Chair Menon thanked the juries for their time in selecting the awardees.

In absentia, Marina Silva, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Brazil, received the John C. Phillips Memorial Award, in recognition of her outstanding service in international conservation.

Simon Stuart, former SSC Chair, received the Harold Jefferson Coolidge Memorial Medal, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the conservation of nature and natural resources.

Silvia Earle, Founder, Mission Blue, Jeffrey McNeely (in absentia), former IUCN Chief Scientist, and John Robinson, former Vice President of the IUCN Council were presented with the IUCN Honorary Membership Award in recognition of their many years of outstanding service in nature conservation worldwide.

The IISD’s summary of the 2025 IUCN World Conservation Congress will be available on Saturday, 18 October 2025, [here](#).



Group photo at the end of the IUCN Awards Ceremony