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## Summary of the 2025 IUCN World Conservation Congress: 9-15 October 2025

The world’s natural resources and life-support systems are facing unprecedented rates of decline, with biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change converging into a triple planetary crisis. These pressures are further compounded by geopolitical unrest and conflicts, weakening commitments to intergovernmental cooperation, and shrinking civic space.

It was against this backdrop that the 2025 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress convened under the theme “Powering transformative conservation.”

The Congress addressed five interlinked themes: scaling up resilient conservation action; reducing climate overshoot risks; delivering on equity; transitioning to nature-positive economies and societies; and disruptive innovation and leadership for conservation. The themes were discussed through multi-stream interactive meetings of the Forum, held from 9-12 October, bringing together diverse voices to confront environmental challenges and chart the future through collective action.

The Forum was flanked by five summits: the first [World Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nature](#), a [Business Summit](#), a [Youth Summit](#), and a [Philanthropy Summit](#), as well as the [3rd Middle East and North Africa \(MENA\) Oceans Summit](#).

The Congress featured a three and a half day Members’ Assembly (9 October, and 13-15 October), which is the central decision-making body responsible for, among others, deliberating and voting on motions, which are the primary mechanisms for the Union to set policies and priorities for its work.

Assembly Members adopted close to 150 motions resolving to pursue policy directions in diverse areas, including on biodiversity, climate, health, ecocide, and plastic pollution. The Congress also adopted a new [20-year Strategic Vision for IUCN](#), committing to influence, encourage, and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and ensure any use of natural resources is both equitable and ecologically sustainable.

In addition, the Congress approved a bold new quadrennial [IUCN Programme 2026-2029](#) to lead and influence the global environmental agenda, with actionable outputs and outcomes that will guide every component of the Union to achieve measurable impact.

The [Abu Dhabi Call to Action](#) adopted by the Members’ Assembly unites world leaders in affirming that humanity has reached a critical point: nature faces escalating crises from climate change, degradation, biodiversity loss, pollution, and

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inequity. With only five years left to meet the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), participants urged bold, transformative action across all sectors, rooted in justice, equity, and multilateral cooperation. The Abu Dhabi Call to Action advocated for urgent global action in five priority areas:

- Reaffirming nature’s central role by protecting and restoring biodiversity in its own right, and as the foundation of human health, development, and well-being, while supporting local custodians and community-led action;
- Strengthening multilateralism by fostering collective leadership, cooperation, and adherence to international law, with coordinated policies that integrate nature across all sectors;
- Ensuring justice and inclusion by guaranteeing equitable participation and rights-based approaches for women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and environmental defenders;
- Advancing knowledge and innovation by combining science with Indigenous knowledge, and investing in research, education, and technology to drive evidence-based solutions; and
- Scaling resources for action by increasing and aligning financial, human, and technological resources toward regenerative, nature-positive economies, redirecting harmful subsidies, and enabling community resilience.

The 2025 IUCN World Conservation Congress was held at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre, United Arab Emirates (UAE), from 9-15 October 2025, and brought together approximately 10,000 participants, both in-person and virtually. This report provides a summary of selected daily events. To delve deeper into discussions, please see our daily coverage [here](#).

### A Brief History of the IUCN Conservation Congress

IUCN was established in 1948 as an independent scientific organization to “influence, encourage, and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature, and to ensure any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.” IUCN was first established as the International Union for the Protection of Nature (IUPN) in 1948 in Fontainebleau, France. In 1956 it was renamed the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Currently, in 2025, IUCN comprises over 1,500 Members, including 92 States and over 110 government agencies, 32 subnational governments, 1,143 national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and 99 international NGOs, 39 Indigenous Peoples’ Organizations, 58 affiliate members, and includes scientific and academic institutions and business associations in more than 160 countries.

IUCN also has seven Commissions, constituting a network of about 18,000 volunteer experts on biodiversity conservation. The Commissions focus on: climate action; ecosystem management; education and communication; environmental, economic, and social policy; environmental law; species survival; and protected areas (PAs).

The IUCN World Conservation Congress, held every four years, elects IUCN’s Council, which serves as the Union’s governing body. The Council typically meets at least once a year to set the annual budget, decide on major policy issues, and

review implementation of the IUCN Programme. The IUCN Programme is a high-level, strategic document that guides its Members, Commissions, and Secretariat. For the first time, the current [Nature 2030 IUCN Programme](#) sets the Union’s ambition in a decadal timeframe (2021-2030).

The Congress also elects the IUCN President, who chairs the Council and guides IUCN’s work between Congresses. The IUCN Members’ Assembly takes place during the Congress.

The main functions of the Congress are to, among others: define IUCN’s general policy; make recommendations to governments and national and international organizations on matters related to IUCN’s objectives; receive and consider the reports of the Director General, Treasurer, and Chairs of Commissions and Regional Committees; receive the auditor’s report and approve the audited accounts; determine Member dues; consider and approve the IUCN Programme and Financial Plan for the intersessional period; determine the number of Commissions and their mandates; and elect the President, Treasurer, Regional Councillors, and Chairs of Commissions.

The Congress also provides a forum for debate on how best to conserve nature and ensure natural resources are used equitably and sustainably.

IUCN has been instrumental in developing conservation programmes for major ecosystems, including forests, wetlands, and coastal areas. Drawing on its global network of experts, IUCN identifies categories of threatened species, produces species action plans, and publishes [Red Lists](#) and Red Data Books, which detail the status and conservation needs of threatened and endangered species. IUCN also plays a critical role in supporting PAs worldwide, publishing the [Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas](#), convening the World Parks Congress, and disseminating guidelines on PA management issues.

### Previous Congresses

**1st IUCN Congress:** This Congress evolved from the 19 General Assemblies that preceded it, the first of which saw the establishment of the Union in 1948. The first Congress was held in Montreal, Canada, from 12-23 October 1996, under the theme “Caring for the Earth.”

**2nd IUCN Congress:** Held in Amman, Jordan, from 4-11 October 2000, this Congress convened some 2,000 delegates from 140 countries under the theme “Ecospace”— a concept that conveyed the message that transboundary management of ecosystems is vital for the environmental agenda.

**3rd IUCN Congress:** This Congress was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 17-25 November 2004, and convened under the theme “People and Nature—Only One world.” The Congress took place in three sessions: the Commissions at Work, which assessed the work of IUCN’s six Commissions; the World Conservation Forum, which took stock of biodiversity conservation; and the Members’ Business Assembly, which addressed governance, policy, and programmatic issues of the Union.

**4th IUCN Congress:** This Congress was held in Barcelona, Spain, from 5-14 October 2008, and brought together more than 6,600 participants under the theme “A diverse and sustainable world.” This formed the basis for developing a compelling

vision of the world's conservation potential until 2030 through 12 thematic journeys, including bio-cultural diversity and Indigenous Peoples, energy, forests, conserving biodiversity in productive landscapes, law and governance, and business.

**5th IUCN Congress:** This Congress was held in Jeju, Republic of Korea, from 6-15 September 2012, and hosted approximately 10,000 participants and more than 600 events under the theme "Nature+." The Congress introduced the open knowledge-sharing Forum in addition to the decision-making Members' Assembly. It focused on five thematic areas: exploring nature-based solutions (NbS) to climate change, food security, and social and economic development; valuing and conserving nature; and effective and equitable governance of nature's use.

**6th IUCN Congress:** This Congress was held in Honolulu, Hawai'i, US, from 1-10 September 2016, under the theme "Planet at the Crossroads." The Congress focused on the collective challenge of attaining the then recently agreed SDGs. It approved 106 resolutions and recommendations aimed at improving the Union's governance, programmes, and policies. The Congress presented the [Hawai'i Commitments](#), representing globally transformative and innovative conservation initiatives to meet the critical challenges and opportunities of the time, including the imperative to scale up action on biodiversity and the SDGs.

**7th IUCN Congress:** This Congress, held in Marseille, France, from 3-11 September 2021, combined in-person and virtual participation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It brought together approximately 9,000 participants (6000 in person and 3000 online) from 160 countries under the theme "Nature's Solutions: Building a Nature-positive Future." The Congress was structured around seven themes: landscapes; freshwater; the Ocean; climate change; rights and governance; economic and financial systems; and knowledge, innovation, and technology. The Assembly adopted 148 resolutions and recommendations. Its landmark outcome was the [Marseille Manifesto](#), which underscored the critical role of nature in human health, security, and sustainable development.

## Report of the IUCN Forum

### Congress Opening

The Congress opened on [Thursday, 9 October](#), and was attended by Emirati dignitaries including HRH Sheikh Mohamed



Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE and Ruler of Abu Dhabi



Princess Lalla Hasnaa, Morocco

bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE and Ruler of Abu Dhabi.

In his opening remarks, Surangel Whipps Jr., President of Palau, outlined his country's concept of "*bul*," a moratorium adopted by village chiefs to allow nature to renew itself. He highlighted its representation of adaptability, restraint, and respect for nature, which are essential to balance nature conservation and the well-being of people.

Princess Lalla Hasna, Morocco, underlined, among others, the role of youth in ensuring the equitable and inclusive use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to design solutions to environmental challenges.

In her keynote address, Amna bint Abdullah Al Dahak, Minister of Climate Change and Environment, UAE, stressed that our responsibility to the environment "is not a choice, but an ethical commitment." Razan Al Mubarak, President, IUCN, noted that multilateralism is under strain, but also recognized an emerging spirit of cooperation that acknowledges the inseparability of people and nature. She said this Congress is "an opportunity to turn understanding into unity and unity into action."

**IUCN High-level Opening Dialogue:** Moderator Grethel Aguilar, Director General, IUCN, characterized the IUCN as an "unstoppable force for change" and emphasized trust in science and traditional wisdom as key to addressing the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and growing polarization.

IUCN Patron of Nature Sylvia Earle, Founder, Mission Blue, channelled the words of the late primatologist Jane Goodall, reminding participants that humans are the only species with the capacity and responsibility to shape millennia to come, underscoring that "the decisions that will be made in the next five years will be terminal."

In a pre-recorded video message, HRH Prince William of Wales stressed that "protecting nature is not the task of the few but a responsibility for us all." He urged inclusion of Indigenous and youth perspectives in nature conservation. An Emirati youth representative, Sarai Al Mheiri, recited a poem centering on the interconnectedness of humans with nature.



**Nick Salafsky**, Executive Director, Foundations of Success

### **Thematic Plenaries**

Thematic plenaries took place on [Thursday, 9 October](#), and were based on the five interlinked Congress themes: scaling up resilient conservation action; reducing climate overshoot risks; delivering on equity; transitioning to nature-positive economies and societies; and disruptive innovation and leadership for conservation. This report provides a brief summary of discussions under each theme. For more in-depth coverage and for a glimpse into the panel discussions, please see our [daily report](#).

**Shaping Resilience, Scaling Impact:** This Plenary, moderated by Nick Salafsky, Executive Director, Foundations of Success, examined practical approaches for scaling conservation. Rob Walton, Founder, Rob Walton Foundation, discussed the [Africa Keystone Protected Area Partnership](#), which seeks to safeguard 162 vital ecosystems by 2035. He also mentioned the need for stable and long-term funding.

Soo Khiang Bey, Vice Chairman, Royal Golden Eagle Pte. Ltd., shared the company's "production-protection approach" as a commitment to conserve one hectare of forest for every hectare of plantation. Aziz Abdulkhakimov, Minister of Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change, Uzbekistan, highlighted the Yashil Makon (Green Nation) Nationwide Initiative that aims to plant 200 million trees annually.

**Everything, Everywhere, All at Once: Addressing the Risks of Climate Overshoot:** This Plenary addressed the risks posed by worsening climate change and solutions available to address these risks.

Moderator Becky Anderson, CNN International, recalled that a 43% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 will be necessary to achieve the goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5°C. She explained that "this is not a moral crusade; this is about finding solutions that are fair, fast, and grounded in science and justice."

In a keynote speech, Mukhtar Babayev, President of the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Azerbaijan, highlighted, among others, the [Baku to Belém Roadmap to 1.3T](#), launched at COP 29 to scale up climate finance for developing nations to at least USD 1.3 trillion per year by 2035.

During the ensuing panel discussion, Ralph Regenvanu, Minister for Climate Change Adaptation, Energy, Environment, Meteorology, Geo-Hazards and Disaster Management, Vanuatu, said the Plenary's title indicates the urgency of addressing the climate crisis from all fronts, and stressed fossil fuel phase-out as imperative. Seyni Nafō, UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Group on Climate Action, urged enhanced adaptation action to protect those most vulnerable to climate risks.

### **Driving Equity, Rethinking Inclusive Conservation:**

This Plenary focused on the importance of conservation and biodiversity to delivering equity. Whaiā Sonic Weaver, First Nations performer of Ngāti Kahungunu, Māori descent, opened the session. Musonda Mumba, Secretary General, Convention on Wetlands, moderated.

In a keynote address, IUCN Director General Aguilar emphasized that "the path to a thriving planet must be built on equity." She called for IUCN to unite under a triple transformation centered on rights, knowledge, and finance, emphasizing a rights-based approach that embraces the free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs).

### **Nature-Positive Future: Turning Pledges into Investments:**

This Plenary was opened by Juha Siikamäki, Chief Economist, IUCN, and moderated by Achim Steiner, former UN Development Programme Administrator. In a keynote address, Serge Wilmes, Minister of the Environment, Climate and Biodiversity, Luxembourg, underscored the need for cooperation and harmony with nature.

Boipuso Wynter Mmolotsi, Minister of Environment and Tourism, Botswana, highlighted the need to boost the country's ecotourism sector. He outlined investments in Botswana's wildlife-based economy and the importance of benefits from conservation accruing to local communities.

Valerie Hickey, Global Director for Climate Change, World Bank, explained that the Bank invests USD 5.5 billion annually in nature, and called for more affordable and reliable funding for smallholders.

### **Inclusive Innovation and Bold Leadership: The Disruption We Seek:**

This Plenary was moderated by Karimah Hudda, Founder, illumine.earth, who underscored that solutions targeting



**Karimah Hudda**, Founder and Chief Catalyst, illumine.earth



Becky Anderson, CNN International

nature are not being implemented fast enough, and called for a step change in leadership and innovation.

Jacob Martin-Malus, Assistant Deputy Minister, Biodiversity, Wildlife and Parks, Government of Québec, Canada, underlined the bottom-up approach used to craft Quebec's nature plan as a response to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

Daouda Sembene, CEO, AfriCatalyst, underlined the need for more private capital for nature conservation, and urged governments to create conducive environments for public and private investment.

### High-level Dialogues

High-level dialogues took place from 10-12 October, bringing together global decision makers, heads of intergovernmental institutions, private sector CEOs, NGO heads, and others to discuss such topics as investments for nature preservation, tools and innovations, and partnerships and collaborations for nature.

**Nature is Everyone's Business: Mobilizing Capital for Biodiversity and Resilience:** This High-level Dialogue on [Friday, 10 October](#) opened the [Business Summit](#), bringing together global decision-makers to share how they are unlocking new opportunities for investments in nature. Becky Anderson, CNN International, moderated.

The keynote address was delivered by IUCN President Al Mubarak, who underscored that the cost of biodiversity loss is no longer abstract but unfolding "here and now," disrupting supply chains, and posing significant risks to business.

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 ensuing panel focused on: innovative finance; a business case for nature; the power of philanthropic and catalytic capital to overcome risk; and sustainability investments.

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.

**One Health: The Only Healthy Future for People, Animals, and Ecosystems:** This High-level Dialogue, convened on [Saturday, 11 October](#), and addressed the Congress's themes of reducing climate overshoot risks and scaling up resilient conservation action. Ashley Lashley, Youth Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on Climate Change, moderated.

Director General Aguilar reiterated IUCN's support to the One Health approach through commitment, collaboration, and advocacy. She noted efforts to convene stakeholders and mobilize partnerships to strengthen dialogue and knowledge sharing and warned "if we destroy nature, we destroy our own survival."

Tedros Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization (WHO), joined via video to discuss how NbS support the One Health approach, referencing the [joint 2024 report by IUCN and WHO](#).

In her keynote address, Paula Harrison, UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, highlighted key messages emerging from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) [Nexus Assessment](#) Report.

An expert panel then discussed ways to support the One Health approach.

**Transformational Change from Rio and Beyond: An All-out Push for the 2030 Goals:** This Dialogue on [Sunday, 12 October](#), centered on two of the Congress's themes: scaling up resilient conservation action; and transitioning to nature-positive economies and societies. The Dialogue was moderated by Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Chair, Board Villars Institute Foundation. In her keynote address, IUCN Director General Aguilar underscored the need to continue striving for wholeness, breaking siloes, challenging inertia, and embracing innovation.

The first panel focused on, among others, enhancing synergies between the Rio Conventions and multiple stakeholders. Batbaatar Bat, Minister of Climate Change and Environment, Mongolia, affirmed the work his government is doing to combat desertification, climate change, and biodiversity loss, and enhance ecosystem resilience.

During the second panel on visions for a framework beyond the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Carlos Manuel



Batbaatar Bat, Minister of Climate Change and Environment, Mongolia

Rodríguez, CEO and Chairperson, Global Environment Facility (GEF), stressed the need for national governments to create policies and frameworks to level the economic playing field, including through tax reforms and green accounting.

### Thematic Sessions

Thematic sessions were held from 9-12 October and addressed topics that cut across two or more thematic areas. Speakers and participants had the opportunity to discuss and share information, knowledge, and the latest advancements available to enable transformative nature conservation.

**ALL IN for One Health: Uniting Efforts to Protect People, Animals, and the Environment:** This thematic session on [Thursday, 9 October](#), examined efforts to operationalize the One Health approach in conservation and biodiversity. The session was moderated by Brent Mitchell, Quebec-Labrador Foundation, who reflected on the evolution of the One Health approach.

Sarah Olson, Director, Health Research for the Health Programme, Wildlife Conservation Society, previewed the MAP-ACT-CREATE One Health Toolkit, soon to be released by IUCN. The toolkit seeks to aid in the mapping and assessment of pathogens to support control measures of diseases, analyze and control transmission, and assess and enhance One Health capacities.

Paula Prist, IUCN, discussed integrating One Health into spatial planning to consider how altering landscapes affect human, animal, and environmental health. She noted the role of Indigenous territories in safeguarding human health and provided an overview of how a low amount of forest cover increases vector-borne diseases, while high levels of forest cover reduce this risk.

Pamela McElwee, Rutgers University, outlined the IPBES [Nexus Assessment](#) on the interlinkages between biodiversity, water, food, and health in the context of climate change.

Kim Gruetzmacher, German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, highlighted the interlinkages between the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and WHO. She noted, however, that these interlinkages go beyond One Health, and that One Health approaches are not necessarily biodiversity inclusive.

**ENACT Partnership Stories from the Ground: What Do Successful and Unsuccessful NbS Look Like?** This cross-



**Brent Mitchell**, Senior Vice President, Quebec-Labrador Foundation



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

cutting thematic session, convened on [Friday, 10 October](#), 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.

Melissa de Kock, Deputy Director, UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), 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.

**IUCN and International Courts: Climate Change Advisory Opinions:** This thematic session, which convened on [Saturday, 11 October](#), and was moderated by Ayman Cherkaoui, Deputy Chair, IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL), considered the three recent advisory opinions on climate change issued by international courts.

Director General Aguilar celebrated the Union's close involvement in the development of the three advisory opinions and noted they "change the conversation" by telling us that "climate action is not only a matter of policy and politics, but of law and justice".

Christina Voigt, Chair, IUCN WCEL, highlighted some of the core findings, including: the affirmation of the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as the best available science; the assertion that climate obligations stem from different sources of international law beyond climate treaties; and the need to act with "stringent due diligence" to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Francesco Sindico, Co-Chair, IUCN WCEL Climate Change Specialist Group, outlined various national-level lawsuits and judgements that reference [International Court of Justice's \(ICJ\) Advisory Opinions](#). He underlined that "in a world where multilateralism is a bit shaky, rigorous lawyering is needed now more than ever."



Madhu Rao, Chair, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas

**Rethinking Urban Conservation: Framing New Opportunities for Urban Protected Areas (UPAs):** This thematic session convened on [Sunday, 12 October](#), and touched on the two Congress themes of disruptive innovation and leadership for conservation, and transitioning to nature-positive economies and societies.

Madhu Rao, Chair, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), drew attention to the fact that cities are home to 55% of the world's population, with this number set to rise to 75% by 2050, and lamented the challenges faced by UPAs.

In a video message, Carolina Figueroa and Hoda Gray, Co-Chairs of IUCN's Urban Conservation Strategies Specialist Group, noted that UPAs are fragmented and underfunded despite often being the first point of contact between people and nature.

Peter Frost, Natural Resources Wales, moderated the panel discussion, noting that the dialogue will feed into the 11-year update of the [IUCN UPA Guidelines](#).

**A Global Strategy for Conserving Freshwater Biodiversity:** This thematic session, convened on [Sunday, 12 October](#), aligned with the Congress's themes of scaling up resilient conservation action, and transitioning to nature-positive economies and societies.

Moderated by Maria Ana Borges, IUCN, this session elaborated on the rationale and process for developing the first



Maria Ana Borges, IUCN

global, Union-wide [Freshwater Biodiversity Conservation Strategy](#).

Catherine Sayer, IUCN, highlighted the importance of freshwater ecosystems as biodiversity hotspots and ecosystem service providers. While acknowledging that freshwater species populations have declined by 85% since 1970, with a quarter of them threatened with extinction, she welcomed increasing recognition of this issue through GBF Targets 2 (restore 30% of all degraded ecosystems) and 3 (conserve 30% of land, waters and seas), among others.

In a keynote, James Dalton, Water and Wetlands, IUCN, presented the process of developing the Freshwater Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, its 2030 vision, and its key pillars of pollution, invasive species, habitats, and connectivity.

### **Speaker Pitches: Conservation Showcase**

Speaker Pitches at the Forum were organized as dynamic platforms where speakers delivered short, impactful presentations on innovative projects, cutting-edge solutions, and success stories in nature conservation.

**Oceans of Opportunity: Technology and Youth Driving Marine Conservation:** This Speaker Pitch, held on [Friday, 10 October](#), 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 of scaling up resilient conservation action by showcasing technologies for species monitoring and strengthening data-driven decision making for conservation measures.

Dorothea Theunissen, German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), shared the importance of the Bay of Bengal's Swatch of No Ground MPA, a biodiversity hotspot that serves as a habitat for marine megafauna and vital feeding, as well as breeding grounds and a migration corridor for cetaceans and fish.

A.B.M. Sarowar Alam, IUCN Bangladesh, presented the results of research in the Swatch of No Ground MPA 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.

**Changemakers Pitch Event:** This Speaker Pitch, on [Saturday, 11 October](#), featured young social innovators' presentations of sustainable ideas and solutions to address socio-environmental challenges while responding to queries from a jury and the audience. Moderator Maria Fedorova, INSEAD Business School, highlighted the challenges social entrepreneurs face in scaling their innovations and accessing finance.

Becca Liu, Founder, HappyPower, presented a concept that enables communities to generate and store their own electricity through human motion in children's modular playgrounds. Youness Ouazri, Founder, Ecodome Maroc, shared his idea of earthen houses in rural Morocco. Elisa Harley, CEO and Founder, Enivo Pots, pitched biodegradable plant pots made from local plant pulp from New Zealand.

Oliver Dauert, Founder, Wildya, shared his vision of a "Y Combinator for Nature," referring to the Y Combinator

technology accelerator that launched start-ups like Uber and Airbnb. Shibani Padhy, Founder, Project Dolphin, shared her prototype of a mini submarine fitted with a waterproof camera and sensors to detect, map, and monitor plastic waste in inland water bodies.

### Learning Zone

The Learning Zone convened multiple events, including Deep Dive sessions, primarily organized for young professionals and educators and designed as immersive learning experiences to tackle complex conservation challenges. These capacity-development sessions provided participants the opportunity to share skills and exchange knowledge on practical solutions for nature conservation. Also taking place in the Learning Zone were Hot off the Press events, which typically launched new and significant reports.

**Governance of the Ocean: Understanding the High Seas Treaty (BBNJ):** This Deep Dive session, held on [Friday, 10 October](#), 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 (BBNJ Agreement). Alejandro Iza, Director, Environmental Law Centre, IUCN Secretariat, moderated the session.

Panelists engaged participants in discussing, among others, impacts on regional fisheries management organizations, traditional ecological knowledge, and the future of BBNJ COPs. Kristina Gjerde, Senior High Seas Advisor, IUCN WCEL, reminded participants that much work remains. Christina Voigt, Chair, IUCN WCEL, called on parties to "breathe life into this vital agreement."

**Agricultural Support, Biodiversity and Trade: Examining Connections to Repurpose Harmful Incentives:** This Hot off the Press event, on [Saturday, 11 October](#), launched the [IUCN Report on linkages between agricultural support, biodiversity, and trade](#). The study offers recommendations on how to reform and better align agricultural policies with respective GBF targets. One of the report's authors, Antonin Vergez, IUCN, summarized key



L-R: **Carlos Manuel Rodríguez**, CEO and Chairperson, GEF; **Astrid Schomaker**, Executive Secretary, CBD; and **Jacob Martin-Malus**, Assistant Deputy Minister, Biodiversity, Wildlife and Parks, Government of Québec

messages of the study, including that agriculture occupies 37% of land and threatens 34% of IUCN Red List-assessed species. He underscored that halting biodiversity loss requires decoupling food systems from the degradation of nature.

Matthieu Le Grix, Agence Française de Développement (AFD), welcomed the report as essential to incentivize agricultural and trade policy reforms. He highlighted the need to connect its recommendations with the global food security agenda, in addition to biodiversity goals.

### Exhibitor Event

Exhibitor events were held in the exhibition zone throughout the duration of the Congress and showcased achievements and initiatives in nature conservation.

**The Global Biodiversity Framework Fund: Early Successes and Perspectives:** This exhibitor event, held on [Sunday, 12 October](#), contributed to the Congress's themes of scaling up resilient conservation action and transitioning to nature-positive economies and societies. Moderated by David Ainsworth, GEF, speakers reflected on the early achievements of the GBF Fund, launched in 2023 to enhance GBF implementation, including that the fund has already mobilized USD 200-300 million.

GEF CEO and Chairperson Rodríguez listed improvements to GEF funding modalities through the GBF Fund, including: reduced project approval time down to six months; flexible capitalization, which enables new funding from the private sector and philanthropy; and increased inclusivity and equity by providing direct funding for IPLCs.

Astrid Schomaker, CBD Executive Secretary, reported anomalies and inaccuracies in current estimations of the biodiversity funding gap. She noted that while donors have exhibited a growing tendency towards bilateral funding, further de-risking support to least developed countries (LDCs) is needed.

Following this, participants from MEXICO, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, and MADAGASCAR shared their experiences in projects financed by the GBF Fund.



**Kristina Gjerde**, Senior High Seas Advisor, IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law 2021-2025



Grethel Aguilar, Director General, IUCN

### Forum Closing

The Forum closing session convened on [Sunday, 12 October](#) under the title “Powering transformative conservation.” Musonda Mumba, Secretary General, Convention on Wetlands, moderated.

IUCN Director General Aguilar reflected on the past four days of the Congress, emphasizing that “one truth has become undeniably clear: conservation works.” She highlighted some of the key announcements made during the Congress, including the recovery of green sea turtle populations, the rollout of the [IUCN World Heritage Outlook 4](#), the launch of the [Rapid High Integrity Nature Positive Outcomes](#) (RHINO) approach, the [Second Edition of the Nature-based Solutions Global Standard](#), and the [IUCN Glacier Action Network](#). She announced that Panama will host the [2027 World Protected and Conserved Areas Congress](#) and concluded by underscoring three priorities: scaling up science-based action; ensuring equity and inclusivity; and aligning nature and the economy.

Following a musical performance by Inna Modja, UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Goodwill Ambassador, a panel convened to discuss key take-aways from the Forum. Justin Langan, Executive Director, O’KANATA, welcomed the meaningful dialogues and promotion of the role and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples.

Amelia Fawcett, Co-Chair, International Advisory Panel on Biodiversity Credits, applauded the focus on action and helping to “move the needle from what to how.” Referring to “radical tenderness,” Swetha Stotra Bhashyam, Global Youth Biodiversity Network, called for changing the narrative around our relationship with nature.

In her closing remarks, IUCN President Al Mubarak highlighted that protecting nature is not just an environmental goal but the foundation of human well-being and prosperity. She urged members to shift the focus “from dialogue to decision” in the upcoming Members’ Assembly.

The Forum closed at 5:09pm.

### Report of the IUCN Members’ Assembly

The Members’ Assembly, the Union’s highest decision-making body, organizes its plenary sessions as sittings. Nine sittings of

the Members’ Assembly were convened during the 2025 IUCN World Conservation Congress, with the first sitting taking place on Thursday, 9 October, and subsequent sittings convening from Monday, 13 October, to Wednesday 15, October.

On [Thursday, 9 October](#), IUCN President Al Mubarak opened the IUCN Members’ Assembly for its first sitting, recalling the proud tradition of past Congresses in marking milestones in conservation history. She affirmed that the Congress would continue this legacy in Abu Dhabi. She stressed that the Assembly lies at the heart of the Congress and highlighted urgency of action, with only five years remaining to achieve the GBF targets and SDGs.

The following sections summarize the proceedings, organized according to the agenda.

### Appointment of the Credentials Committee

On [Thursday, 9 October](#), Imèn Meliane, Vice President, IUCN, introduced the proposed terms of reference ([CGR-2025-1.2-1, Annex 1](#)) and membership ([CGR-2025-1.2-1 Annex 2](#)), which Members approved. Ayman Rabi, Chair of the Credentials Committee, outlined Members’ voting and speaking rights.

### Adoption of the Agenda

On [Thursday, 9 October](#), IUCN Vice President Meliane presented the revised draft agenda ([CGR-2025-1.3-1-Rev-1](#)) and **Motion A** for proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure that would improve the motions process ([CGR-2025-1.4-1-Motion A-Rev1](#)), reflecting lessons learned from past Congresses and the 2025 online process. Following a vote, the Assembly approved the agenda and the proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure.

### Appointment of Congress Committees

On [Thursday, 9 October](#), IUCN Vice President Meliane drew attention to the Terms of Reference and appointment of the Resolutions, Finance and Audit, Governance, Programme, and Steering Committees ([GR-2025-1.5-1, Annex 1, Annex 2, Annex 3, Annex 4, and Annex 5](#)). These were approved following a vote by Members.



Jon Paul Rodríguez, Chair, IUCN Resolutions Committee



**Susan Lieberman**, Chair, IUCN Council's Programme and Policy Committee



**Razan Al Mubarak**, President, IUCN

### ***First Report of the Resolutions Committee***

On [Thursday, 9 October](#), Jon Paul Rodríguez, Chair, IUCN Resolutions Committee, presented the process to file motions, noting that 97 motions had already been decided by electronic ballot, all of which had been adopted and were recorded *en bloc* by the Members ([CGR-2025-1.6-1, Annex 1](#)). He reported that 40 motions had not yet been remitted to the Assembly for discussion. He also outlined the process for submitting new and urgent motions.

### ***Presentation of the Abu Dhabi Call to Action***

On [Thursday, 9 October](#), Susan Lieberman, Chair, IUCN Council's Programme and Policy Committee, recalled the Council's decision to establish a drafting group tasked with elaborating an outcome document and lauded the smooth collaboration within the group. During the closing session on Wednesday, 15 October, Lieberman presented the [Abu Dhabi Call to Action](#) as a "collective commitment to defending life on Earth." Members approved the Call to Action by acclamation.

### ***Director General's Report***

On [Monday, 13 October](#), Director General Aguilar presented her report ([CGR-2025-2.3-1, Annex 1](#)). On past activities, she highlighted that the IUCN Programme 2021-2025 sought to mobilize the entire Union and for the first time included a 10-year ambition timeframe ([Nature 2030](#)). Noting Nature 2030 is defined by five overarching areas of work (people, land, water, Ocean, and climate), she lauded tangible achievements, such as IUCN's involvement in the advisory opinions of international courts and the Union's efforts in rallying support for the ratification of the [BBNJ Agreement](#).

On funding, she noted that IUCN holds the biggest GEF portfolio, which enables re-granting of funds to Members and Indigenous Peoples. She underscored that IUCN's projects, while not growing in quantity, are growing in size and depth.

### ***Report of the IUCN Council***

On [Monday, 13 October](#), IUCN President Al Mubarak presented the report of the Council ([CGR-2025-2.4-1](#)), noting

the Council's crucial role as the principal governance body of the Union. Among others, she welcomed the Union's increased project portfolio and involvement in multilateral environmental agreements and international advisory proceedings, highlighting the admission of 341 new IUCN Members since the last Congress.

Hasna Jasimuddin Moudud, Councilor, IUCN, thanked the outgoing Council for the collaborative spirit, noting that "this is the Arab Spring of conservation." She expressed hope that IUCN would play a role in rebuilding ecosystems in Gaza.

### ***Draft 20-Year Strategic Vision for the Union***

On [Monday, 13 October](#), IUCN President Al Mubarak introduced the draft Strategic Vision document ([CGR-2025-2.5-1, Rev2 Annex 1](#)) and noted the Union's Steering Committee received over 1000 comments from the contact groups, most of which were addressed in the updated draft. Recalling IUCN's role in shaping the global conservation agenda over the past 75 years, she underscored how the fast-changing pace of the world compounds challenges that increasingly put pressure on people and the planet. Members voted on and approved the Strategic Vision.

### ***Report from the Election Officer on the Results of All Elections***

On [Monday, 13 October](#), Romiro Batzin Chojoj, IUCN Vice President, introduced this item. David Forman, Election Officer, and Claudia de Windt, Deputy Election Officer, presented their report ([CGR-2025-2.2-1 Annex 1](#)) and opened elections for Regional Councilors, Indigenous Councilor, President, Treasurer, and Commission Chairs.

### ***Draft IUCN Programme 2026–2029***

On [Monday, 13 October](#), Director General Aguilar introduced the draft IUCN Programme 2026-2029 (CGR-2025-3.1-1 Annex 1). She also introduced the draft IUCN Programme 2026-2029 ([CGR-2025-3.1-1, Rev1 Annex 1](#)). She commended the proposed programme, noting it will scale the Union's work in nature conservation. Madhu Rao, Chair, IUCN Programme and



Sean Southey, Chair, IUCN Commission on Education and Communication

Policy Committee, explained the revised document incorporated amendments from the contact group. Members voted on and approved the IUCN Programme.

### ***IUCN Commission Reports and Reports from National and Regional Committees***

On [Monday, 13 October](#), and [Tuesday, 14 October](#), Members took note of the various IUCN Commission and Committee reports.

**Commission on Environment, Economics and Social Policy (CEESP):** Chair Kristen Walker Painemilla presented the CEESP report ([CGR-2025-3.2-1 Annex 4](#)). On governance, equity, and rights, she noted work on rights-based approaches under the GBF. She highlighted the [Ocean Defender Initiative](#) and pointed to the Commission's engagement in promoting direct access to financing and gender-responsive climate policy. She launched the latest issue of the CEESP's flagship *Policy Matters* journal, dedicated to the theme [Reimagining Conservation](#), and highlighted its call to reimagine conservation action, leadership and justice, money and power, and relationships.

**Commission on Education and Communication (CEC):** Chair Sean Southey, presented the CEC report ([CGR-2025-3.2-1 Annex 2](#)). He recognized the winners of the CEC Regional Awards and the CEC Chairs Awards. He focused on the CEC's work to promote nature for all and to reimagine nature communications, and stressed the importance of nature-based education.

**Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM):** Chair Angela Andrade presented the Commission's report ([CGR-2025-3.2-1 Annex 3](#)), which showcases the CEM's work and achievements during the past four years on, among others, 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 Ecosystems assessment of a tropical glacier ecosystem](#), the [Second Edition of the Global Nature-based Solution Standard](#), and the [Guidelines for Rewilding](#).

**Species Survival Commission (SSC):** Presenting the Commission's report ([CGR-2025-6.1-1 Annex 1](#)), 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.

**WCEL:** Chair Christina Voigt presented the Commission's report ([CGR-2025-6.1-1 Annex 2](#)) and highlighted WCEL's close involvement in advisory proceedings on climate change at the ICJ, 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 [BBNJ Agreement](#), negotiations towards a global plastics treaty, and intergovernmental climate process.

**Climate Crisis Commission (CCC):** Interim Chair Manuel Pulgar-Vidal presented the Climate Crisis Commission report ([CGR-2025-3.2-1 Rev1 Annex 1](#)). The name of this Commission was changed during the Assembly to Climate Action Commission. He recounted the four CCC thematic areas: policy and climate justice; solutions and innovative approaches; finance; and climate and nature, as well as CCC's involvement in different multilateral frameworks. In the second part of the presentation, Brendan Mackey, CCC Steering Committee Member, termed the current climate treaty framework "biodiversity-blind," and pointed to the CCC's expanded focus on synergies between nature and climate action.

**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 GBF (conserve 30% of land, waters, and seas).

**Global IUCN Members Meeting:** Chris Mahon, Chair, IUCN Global Group for National and Regional Committee Development, made an oral presentation on the findings of the Global Meeting, which took place alongside the Forum on 12 October. Ann-Katrine Garn, Group Secretary, highlighted the challenges faced by the National and Regional Committees, including those related to funding, human resources, communication, civic spaces, training, and access to information. Mahon referred to the [Engage Platform](#) as a core communications tool for Members. He underlined the need for better communication among Members and for increased resources, including time, to achieve the expectations identified in the [20-](#)



Chris Mahon, Chair, Global Group for National and Regional Committee Development



Nihal Welikala, IUCN Treasurer



Louisa Chaubert, CFO, IUCN

[year Strategic Vision](#). Garn noted that the Group would circulate a report on these findings. The Assembly took note of the report.

**Adoption of Commission Mandates:** WCPA Chair Rao recalled progress made in a contact group to revise the CAC's mandate from and the Motion on Confirming the status of the CAC (given the change from the CCC to the CAC). She reported that consensus had been reached. Members endorsed the Commission mandates.

### Reports from Congress Summits

On [Monday, 13 October](#), Members heard reports from the [Youth Summit](#) by Sarai Gomez, IUCN Youth Coordinator, and Shamma Alkhoodri and Maitha Al Mheiri, IUCN Youth Advisory Committee, UAE.

Anita Tzec and Verónica Ruiz, IUCN Secretariat, reported on the results of the Congress's first [Indigenous Peoples Summit](#).

Faridah Ibrahim, IUCN, reported on the [Business Summit](#). A Member from NIGERIA called for an action plan to ensure the outcomes of these summits are passed down to the national and local levels.

### Financial Reports

**Report of the Director General on the Finances of IUCN in the Intersessional Period 2021-2024:** On [Tuesday, 14 October](#), Director General Aguilar introduced the report ([CGR-2025-6.3-1](#)), highlighting that the total project portfolio has increased from CHF 800 million in 2021 to CHF 1.2 billion in 2024, while also noting increased reserves. Louisa Chaubert, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), IUCN, presented the financial statements ([CGR-2025-6.3-1 Annex 1](#)), specifically highlighting an increase in project income.

**Report of the Treasurer:** On [Tuesday, 14 October](#), Nihal Welikala, IUCN Treasurer, introduced the report ([CGR-2025-6.4-1](#)) and noted that long-term funding prospects are being eroded by geopolitical predicaments, 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 future challenges: increasing unrestricted funds; increasing project cost recovery; managing costs by balancing between operational expenses and investing to see growth; managing risks inherent in a large portfolio; and building reserves and liquidity.

**Report of the Congress Finance and Audit Committee, and Appointment of External Auditors:** On [Tuesday, 14 October](#), Rick Bates, Chair, Finance and Audit Committee, invited the Congress to approve the audited financial statements.

Various civil society Members reported difficulties in paying membership dues because of national currency devaluation vis-à-vis the Swiss Franc or US Dollar. Referring to an unfair international financial system, they asked IUCN to consider revising dues. Following a vote, Members approved the financial reports. They also appointed Deloitte as external auditors.

**Draft IUCN Financial Plan 2026-2029:** On [Tuesday, 14 October](#), Louisa Chaubert, CFO, IUCN, 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 are projected to remain relatively stable, the income growth level will slow down in line with global 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 by Indigenous organizations and subnational governments. In a vote, Members endorsed the IUCN Financial Plan 2026-2029.

**Membership Dues and Rescission of Members in Arrears:** On Wednesday, 15 October, Chair Bates presented the



Rick Bates, Chair, IUCN Finance and Audit Committee



Simon Stuart, Deputy Chair, Congress Governance Committee

proposed changes to the Motion on membership dues, including: updating the dues of states according to the latest UN Scale of Assessments; an increase in dues to account for inflation since the Marseille Congress in 2021; and an annual increase in membership dues in accordance with the Swiss rate of inflation.

Bates underlined that the payment of membership dues is a statutory obligation and highlighted the list of Members with more than two-year arrears. He recalled that if the rescission of rights is approved, members with such arrears have a grace period of one year to pay, after which their membership would be withdrawn.

Members adopted the Motion on membership dues and rescission of rights of Members in arrears.

### Report of the Congress Governance Committee

**Motion B:** On Wednesday, 15 October, Deputy Chair Stuart reported the lack of consensus in contact group discussions relating to [Motion B](#) and presented the group's proposal to convene a participatory process for Members to review the respective rules, and organize an electronic vote in the intersessional period, subsequently applicable to the motions process of the next Congress. Delegates endorsed this proposal.

**Motion C:** On [Tuesday, 14 October](#), Vivek Menon, Chair, Congress Governance Committee, presented the governance motions. 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; and
- establishing an appeals process against definitive decisions of the Election Officer.

On [Tuesday, 14 October](#), 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 Congress sessions. 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 these concerns, Peter Cochrane, IUCN Vice President, gave Members more time to consider this proposed amendment. Voting opened for the rest of the amendments to IUCN Statutes, with Members approving all the amendments, except that on quorum.

On Wednesday, 15 October, Deputy Chair Stuart presented an amendment to Motion C on the requirement for quorum in cases where amendments to the Statutes are referred to electronic ballot between Congress sessions, which was adopted by Members. Following a vote, the Motion was approved.

**Motion D:** On [Tuesday, 14 October](#), Chair Menon discussed the introduction of a membership dues waiver mechanism for Members facing exceptional financial hardship ([Motion D](#)). He explained that *force majeure* conditions under this amendment would include disasters, armed conflicts, severe economic crisis, and pandemics. He called on Members to vote on the addition of "international sanctions" to the list of conditions.

FRANCE explained that international sanctions are legally not a case of *force majeure*. UKRAINE call 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 (who represent states) facing international sanctions.

On Wednesday, 15 October, Deputy Chair Stuart presented a new Amendment from JAPAN to exclude Category A Members from requesting a waiver due to international sanctions. FRANCE supported this new Amendment and withdrew its earlier Amendment.

Lengthy discussions ensued, including: the UKRAINIAN NATURE CONSERVATION GROUP urging Members not to undermine international law; the RUSSIAN FEDERATION noting discussion on the political situation in Ukraine being beyond IUCN's mandate; SOUTH AFRICA cautioning against weaponizing the Congress with geopolitical debates; FUNDACIÓN HÁBITAT & DESARROLLO, Argentina, questioning the legitimacy of sanctions imposed by a small groups of countries. THE WILDLIFE TRUSTS, UK, reminding the Assembly of *force majeure* being clearly defined in



Fernando Ardura, Fundación Habitat & Desarrollo, Argentina

international law. UNION OF NATURE FOUNDATION, the Netherlands, raised a point of order to close the discussion and put the amendment to a vote, which Members approved.

In the ensuing vote, Members agreed to delete the indicative list of *force majeure* situations entirely from the Motion, and adopted Motion D.

**Motion E:** On Wednesday, 15 October, Deputy Chair Stuart presented **Motion E** to extend the process for submitting new and urgent motions. Urged by SWITZERLAND, Members approved an amendment to open submissions not one week, but two weeks, before the Congress, and close submissions one week ahead of the Congress. In a subsequent vote, Members approved Motion E.

### **Resolutions Committee Progress Report and Vote on Motions**

The motions before the Assembly were discussed and voted on on [Monday, 13](#), [Tuesday, 14](#), and Wednesday 15 October. A list of all the motions can be accessed [here](#).

On [Monday, 13 October](#), Resolutions Committee Chair Rodríguez noted that contact group sessions had started on Friday, 10 October, and drew attention to the online voting platform.

Luc de Wever, IUCN Secretariat, announced the 2025 Congress Steering Committee's decisions on two appeals of new and urgent Motions, one on Lebanon's war-impacted ecosystems (which was admitted) and one on the conservation of chimpanzees (which was rejected on formal grounds).

Members considered an amendment to the **Motion confirming the status of the Climate Crisis Commission**, discussing a possible change of the title to Climate Action Commission. VOICE OF PEOPLE, Pakistan, supported by a Member from Tunisia, proposed this amendment, explaining that the name of the Commission should reflect its mandate. WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY, US, underlined that the Motion had reached consensus and at no time did any contact group Member suggest changing the name of the Commission. In a vote, the amendment to change the Commission's title was approved. Members later endorsed the Motion as amended.

Following contact group deliberations, Members also approved motions on:

- Improving tree planting practices – planting the right tree in the right place for the right purpose;
- Conservation and sustainable management of rangelands and pastoralism;
- Delivering harmonized accountability and means of implementation for international forest protection goals;
- Promoting hedgerows in agriculture to foster biodiversity, strengthen ecosystem resilience, and mitigate climate change;
- Living in harmony with rivers through the rights of nature and ecocentric law;
- Supporting the economic transformation towards a regenerative economy; and
- Mainstreaming mentorship for young ecological stewards to enhance conservation efforts.

They further approved motions on:

- Developing IUCN guidelines to effectively control the commercial pet trade in terrestrial wildlife;
- Strengthening human-nature connectedness to advance transformative change for nature;
- Advancing biodiversity finance with a human rights-based approach;
- Recognizing unequivocally and effectively supporting the crucial conservation role of territories of life and their custodians;
- Protecting 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.

On [Tuesday, 14 October](#), Chair Rodríguez related discussions on the **Motion on IUCN's policy on synthetic biology** in relation to nature conservation. He noted that Members had also presented a Motion on a moratorium on genetically engineered wild species in natural ecosystems. He explained that the contact group had discussed reconciling the motions but had decided against it, preferring to discuss them separately. Members voted in favor of the entire motion on IUCN's synthetic biology policy.

They additionally voted and approved motions on:

- Protecting seamounts and vulnerable marine ecosystems from destructive practices;
- Advancing actions to end plastic pollution to protect human health, biodiversity, and the environment;
- 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;
- Developing a circular and sustainable bioeconomy for sustainable food and agriculture;
- Scaling-up Indigenous leadership in the protection of nature and the sacred;
- Developing an IUCN policy and guidance on AI and conservation, and the integrity of digital evidence;



Luc De Wever, IUCN Secretariat, and Razan Al Mubarak, President, IUCN

- Reaffirming IUCN’s commitment to multilateralism and global cooperation; and
- Supporting the recovery and restoration of Lebanon’s war-impacted ecosystems.

On Wednesday, 15 October, Members continued discussions on outstanding motions. On the **Motion on synergies for a net-zero, nature-positive, and just energy transition**, Members voted in favor of an amendment highlighting the need to transition away from fossil fuels. They rejected language suggested by VANUATU, which stressed the importance of tackling fossil fuel production and urged reference to the [Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative](#) to plug gaps in the international architecture. Following a vote, the revised Motion was adopted.

On the **Motion on genetically engineered wild species in natural ecosystems**, MINDEROO, Australia, raised a point of order, arguing that the Motion conflicts with IUCN Statutes because it contradicts international obligations under the CBD, specifically CBD Decision 14/19 on synthetic biology. A lengthy debate ensued, with DEUTSCHER NATURSCHUTZRING, Germany, BENIN ECOTOURSIM CONCERN, NATURE CANADA, and PRO NATURA, Switzerland, rebutting Minderoo’s point of order. While the President suggested referring the issue to the Resolutions Committee for clarification, WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY tabled a vote to close the debate, which Members narrowly approved. Chair Rodríguez then introduced five amendments revising the title and various preambular and substantive paragraphs of the Motion, all of which were voted on and approved by Members. Still, the amended Motion was narrowly rejected in a subsequent vote.

On the **Motion on soil security law**, Members considered an amendment regarding the development of governance frameworks. In line with comments made by the CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LEGAL STUDIES, US, ISHA OUTREACH, India, and HAWAI’I CONSERVATION ALLIANCE FOUNDATION, US, Members voted in support of developing concepts and parameters for an international convention or a global legal instrument on soil security. The entire Motion was subsequently approved by Members.

On the **Motion on Port State measures regarding illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing**, Members approved two amendments that recommending that: IUCN explore options



Luis Diego Marín Schumacher, Preserve Planet, Costa Rica

to strengthen legal frameworks to address IUU fishing; and IUCN explore establishing a task force to develop an integrated strategy to address IUU fishing impacts on marine biodiversity, human rights, Indigenous communities, and food security. Members rejected an amendment calling on Regional Fisheries Management Organizations to consider expanding data collection and approved the Motion.

On the **Motion on setting area-based targets on scientific evidence and reversing historic injustices**, discussions centered on an amendment proposing that IUCN endeavor to reach a global conservation target of 50% rather than 30%, in order to contribute to implementation of GBF Target 3. Members rejected the amendment, maintaining the original 30% target, and approved the Motion.

Members rejected amending the title of the **Motion on recognition of the rights of Antarctica** to “evaluation of the concept of rights of Antarctica.” They approved encouraging IUCN Members to advance cooperation under the Antarctic Treaty System to protect the intrinsic value of Antarctica and its dependent and associated ecosystems. The Motion was subsequently endorsed by the Assembly.

Members considered an amendment to a **Motion recognizing the crime of ecocide to protect nature** to include text that would include an in-depth examination of Gaza as a critical case study of ecocide. STOP ECOCIDE INTERNATIONAL, UK, supported by Members from ECOPAR, Ecuador, and PRESERVE PLANET, Costa Rica, encouraged Members to vote for the motion but against this amendment, noting the multiple contexts around the world where ecocide is occurring. Members voted to reject the amendment and adopted the Motion.

On a **Motion recognizing the importance of Indigenous languages, traditional knowledge and cultural heritage in biodiversity conservation**, Members discussed an amendment adding “co-developed, traditional and ethno-ecological knowledge” to the title, which was rejected by Members. The Motion, with the original title, was later approved in a vote.

On the **Motion related to regulating financing mechanisms** based on biodiversity credits and certificates and guarantee positive effects on nature, Members voted in favor of text specifying that biodiversity certificate and credit markets should



Leonard Usongo, Cameroon Wildlife Conservation Society

not be substitutes for existing financing mechanisms. The Motion was approved, as amended.

On a **Motion on strengthening planning for preserving biodiversity through the use of longevity conservation approaches to ensure naturally age-structured populations of species**, Members voted on several amendments, including on preambular text that the Motion would not apply to recreational or tourist hunting. The BORN FREE FOUNDATION, CORBETT FOUNDATION, NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL, and an NGO Member from New Zealand called on Members to reject the proposed amendments as they would undermine the intent of the Motion. DALLAS SAFARI CLUB and PROFESSIONAL HUNTERS OF SOUTH AFRICA ASSOCIATION called on Members to accept the amendments as they seek to support the core principles of sustainable use.

Regarding the same Motion, Members also voted to urge the Union to request the SSC and specialist groups to evaluate this Motion in line with available data and to define the term “longevity conservation.” They further voted to call on IUCN constituents, in partnership or collaboration with relevant experts, to consider developing longevity conservation initiatives “ensuring there are no risks to wildlife management systems.” The Motion was subsequently approved by Members.

Members considered a **Motion on amplifying the role of the private sector** in achieving a nature-positive world, voting on an amendment. The amendment encouraged IUCN members to map, support, drive, and track nature-positive pathways to ensure national contribution to and collective implementation of the global goals and targets of the GBF. This could be done by: focusing on furthering public-private partnerships for conservation; driving investments in priority nature; “requiring all development to adhere to the mitigation hierarchy at a minimum”; and developing policy mechanisms that foster transparency and accountability such as voluntary uptake of nature-related disclosures. CANADA noted that deleting the language would align with discussions in the contact group and

the rest of the text. Members voted against the amendment and adopted the Motion.

On the **Motion related to avoiding irreversible ecological damage and tipping points in the Congo Basin**, Members voted on a number of amendments, including to: recognize any recent scientific evidence, research, and literature available, underscoring the risk of irreversible ecological damage in the Congo Basin; and request the Director General to urgently convene a Congo Basin Tipping Point Assessment Task Force to deliver an interim science-based report with recommendations by the end of 2026 or 2028. Members voted for this report to be delivered in 2028. They also voted against a request to the Task Force to develop a guideline for responsible and sustainable development in the Congo Basin. The Motion was adopted.

Chair Rodríguez noted that the contact group had been unable to resolve the text of a **Motion on urgent measures to safeguard the Aldabra World Heritage Site in Seychelles** and suspend of destructive development on Assumption Island, Seychelles. He called for a further dialogue on this during the intersessional period. RESERVA: THE YOUTH LAND TRUST stressed that if the motion is deferred, it’s intent would be nullified, given the looming threat of private development on the island. A Member from SEYCHELLES stressed that, due to time constraints, it had not been possible to reach an agreement on the motion and supported a deferment. Members voted to defer the Motion to the next Congress.

Building on work in contact groups, Members also approved motions on:

- Addressing the climate and biodiversity crises through fossil fuel supply-side measures and a just transition;
- Operationalizing the rights of nature and evaluating their implementation in territories;
- Nature: integrating science, ethical approaches and harmonious coexistence with strategies for ecological recovery;
- Safeguarding biodiversity and human rights in energy transition mineral governance;
- Developing a policy on geoengineering;
- Promoting the models of regional or sub-national protected natural areas to achieve the global target of 30% protected and conserved areas by 2030;
- Upholding science-based wildlife conservation in Switzerland;
- Mobilizing urgent action to prevent and combat wildland fires;
- Welcoming the ICJ Advisory Opinion on climate change; and
- Conserving the critically endangered scalloped hammerhead shark (*Sphyrna lewini*) and its look-alike species the smooth hammerhead shark (*S. zygaena*) and the great hammerhead (*S. mokarran*).

### Awards Ceremony

The IUCN Awards Ceremony was conducted on [Tuesday, 14 October](#), by Sean Southey, Chair, CEC. Awards Jury Chair Vivek Menon thanked the juries for their time in selecting the awardees.



Mark Jones, Born Free Foundation, UK



Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, CAC Chair

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

IUCN Patron of Nature Sylvia Earle, Founder, Mission Blue, Jeffrey McNeely, former IUCN Chief Scientist (in absentia), 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.

### Results of the Election

Ramiro Batzin Chojó, IUCN Councilor, introduced the Election Officers to present their report on Wednesday, 15 October. David Forman, Election Officer, and Claudia de Windt, Deputy Election Officer, presented the results of the election.

Members elected:

- Razan Al Mubarak, UAE, as IUCN President;
- Bláthnaid Byrne, Ireland, Australia, as Treasurer;
- Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, Peru, as CAC Chair;
- Margaret Otieno, Kenya, as CEC Chair;
- Liette Vasseur, Canada, as CEM Chair;
- Ernesto Herrera Guerra, Mexico, as CEESP Chair;
- Vivek Menon, India, as SSC Chair;
- Christina Voigt, Germany, Norway, as WCEL Chair;
- Madhu Rao, UK, as WCPA Chair; and
- Onel Masardule Arias, as IUCN Indigenous Councilor.

Members also elected IUCN Regional Councilors. For Africa, they elected: Imèn Meliane, Tunisia; Charlotte Karibuhoye Said, Guinea Bissau; Caroline Aguti Mugisha, Uganda; and Brian Child, South Africa.

For North American and the Caribbean, they elected: Kathryn Gwiazdon, US; Fernando Lloveras San Miguel, US; and James Bartram, Canada. For Meso and South America, they elected: Maria Cecilia Wey De Brito, Brazil; Ana Di Pangrancio,

Argentina; Oscar Mora Altamirano, Costa Rica; and Ramón Pérez-Gil, Mexico.

For Oceania, they elected: Catherine Iorns, New Zealand; Isoa Korovulavula, Fiji; and Erica McCreedy, Australia. For South and East Asia, they elected: Atsuhiko Yoshinaka, Japan; Roshani Adhikari Pathak, Nepal; Yinfeng Guo, China; Amran Hamzah, Malaysia; and Lima Rosalind, India. For West Asia, they elected: Matrah Al-Mutairi, Kuwait; Simon Awad, Palestine; and Khaled Marafi, Jordan.

For East Europe, North and Central Asia, they elected: Diana Garlytska, Ukraine; Samad-John Smaranda, Romania; and Ruben Khachatryan, Armenia. For West Europe, they elected: Maud Lelièvre, France; Sonia Castañeda, Spain; and Ann-Katrine Garn, Denmark.

**Message from the President Elect:** Re-elected IUCN President Razan Al Mubarak thanked Members for entrusting her with a second mandate. She stressed that we have reached a “moment of paradox” when greater knowledge about nature’s role coincides with unprecedented rates of biodiversity loss. She argued that this paradox “invites purpose” and reiterated the importance of the next quadrennium in reaching the goals set for 2030, saying “2030 is tomorrow.”

**Recognition of Outgoing IUCN Council Members:** Director General Aguilar presented certificates recognizing the hard work of the outgoing IUCN Council members who served from 2021-2025 and whose service, she said, left a lasting mark on the work and governance of the Union.

### Closing Session

On behalf of the IUCN Council, Councilor Marco Vinicio Cerezo expressed gratitude to HRH Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan for his patronage, and to the UAE and its people for their gracious hosting and support for the Congress.

In closing remarks, IUCN Director General Aguilar expressed her gratitude to the IUCN Secretariat and the host



Sylvia Earle, IUCN Patron of Nature

country, highlighting that the Congress had been certified for its sustainability. She called on Members to advance action across the five areas mentioned in the Abu Dhabi Call to Action.

Blen Romam, Cambodia Indigenous Youth Association, urged Members to “honor Indigenous knowledge that has sustained our life on Earth for many centuries.”

Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri, Secretary General, Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, announced the UAE’s recognition of seven new protected areas, raising the country’s percentage of protected areas from 15% to 20%.

IUCN Vice President Peter Cochrane closed the Congress at 7:58 pm.

## Upcoming Meetings

**27th Meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 27):** SBSTTA 27 will address matters of relevance to the implementation of the Convention and the GBF. **dates:** 20-24 October 2025 **location:** Panama City, Panama **www:** [cbd.int/meetings/SBSTTA-27](http://cbd.int/meetings/SBSTTA-27)

**First Meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) (SB8j 1):** Held back-to-back with SBSTTA 27, the first meeting of the Convention’s new Subsidiary Body will address matters related to IPLCs. **dates:** 27-30 October 2025 **location:** Panama City, Panama **www:** [cbd.int/meetings/SB8J-01](http://cbd.int/meetings/SB8J-01)



Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri, Secretary General, Environmental Agency - Abu Dhabi, and IUCN Councilor

**2025 UN Climate Change Conference:** This event will include UNFCCC COP 30, the 20th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 20), and the seventh meeting of the COP serving as the MOP to the Paris Agreement (CMA 7). **dates:** 10-21 November 2025 **location:** Belém, Brazil **www:** [unfccc.int/cop30](http://unfccc.int/cop30)

**20th Meeting of the CoP to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES CoP20):** CITES CoP20 will convene to review the implementation of the Convention. **dates:** 24 November - 5 December 2025 **location:** Samarkand, Uzbekistan **www:** [cites.org/eng/cop/20](http://cites.org/eng/cop/20)



Newly elected and outgoing IUCN Council Members

**Seventh Meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR-7):** The OECPR will convene to prepare for the Seventh Session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) and pre-negotiate proposed resolutions, declarations, and decisions for endorsement and approval by the Assembly. **dates:** 1-5 December 2025 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** [unep.org/environmentassembly/unea7/oecpr7](http://unep.org/environmentassembly/unea7/oecpr7)

**UNEA-7:** UNEA-7 will convene under the theme “Advancing sustainable solutions for a resilient planet.” **dates:** 8-12 December 2025 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **www:** [unep.org/environmentassembly](http://unep.org/environmentassembly)

**12th Session of IPBES (IPBES 12):** IPBES informs action and policies to address biodiversity loss through, for example, the publication of thematic assessment reports. At its 12th meeting, the IPBES Plenary will consider, among others, linkages between business and biodiversity, and increasing the effectiveness of the Platform. **date:** 3-8 February 2026 **location:** Manchester, United Kingdom **www:** [www.ipbes.net/events/ipbes-12-plenary](http://www.ipbes.net/events/ipbes-12-plenary)

**Sixth Meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI 6):** Taking place in Rome, Italy, SBI 6 will review progress made by Member States in implementing the convention ahead of CBD COP 17 in October 2026. **date:** 16-19 February 2026 **location:** Rome, Italy **www:** [www.cbd.int/events/](http://www.cbd.int/events/)

**UNCCD COP 17:** The UNCCD is scheduled to convene COP 17 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. The host country is expected to leverage sustainable solutions for land restoration, sustainable land management, and resilience building globally. COP 17 coincides with the [International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists](#) (IYRP 2026). **date:** 17-28 August 2026 **location:** Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia **www:** [unccdcop17.org](http://unccdcop17.org)

**CBD COP17:** CBD COP17 will convene in Yerevan, Armenia, with the 12th Meeting of the COP serving as the MOP to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CP-MOP-12), and MOP 6 to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Arising from their Utilization (NP-MOP-6). **date:** 19-30 October 2026 **location:** Yerevan, Armenia **www:** [www.cbd.int/events](http://www.cbd.int/events)

**11th Our Ocean Conference (OOC 11):** The OOC addresses the sustainability challenges related to ocean management and conservation, including climate change impacts, MPAs, sustainable blue economy and fisheries, biodiversity loss, pollution, and maritime security. The World Resources Institute hosts the OOC Secretariat. Kenya will host the 11th OOC in 2026. **date:** TBC, 2026 **location:** TBC, Kenya **www:** [www.ouroceanconference.org/about/](http://www.ouroceanconference.org/about/)

**Seventh IUCN World Protected and Conserved Areas Congress:** This Congress is the premier global forum for setting the agenda for protected and conserved areas. It brings together leaders and experts to develop and advance solutions for nature conservation involving effective area-based conservation. It

will take place in September 2027 and, for the first time, will be held in the Mesoamerica region, home to a diverse range of biodiversity. **date:** TBC September, 2027 **location:** TBC, Panama **www:** [iucn.org/press-release/202510/panama-host-next-world-protected-and-conserved-areas-congress-2027](http://iucn.org/press-release/202510/panama-host-next-world-protected-and-conserved-areas-congress-2027)  
For additional upcoming events, see: [sdg.iisd.org](http://sdg.iisd.org)

## Glossary

AI	Artificial intelligence
BBNJ Agreement	Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction
CAC	Climate Action Commission
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEC	Commission on Education and Communication
CEESP	Commission on Environment, Economic and Social Policy
CEM	Commission on Ecosystem Management
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
COP	Conference of the Parties
FPIC	Free, prior, and informed consent
GBF	Global Biodiversity Framework
GEF	Global Environment Facility
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPLCs	Indigenous Peoples and local communities
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
IUU	Illegal, unreported, and unregulated
LDCs	Least developed countries
MOP	Meeting of the Parties
MPA	Marine Protected Areas
NbS	Nature-based solutions
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
PA	Protected area
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSC	Species Survival Commission
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
UNEA	UN Environment Assembly
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UPA	Urban protected areas
WCEL	World Commission on Environmental Law
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WCPA	World Commission on Protected Areas
WHO	World Health Organization