

## IUCN World Conservation Congress Highlights: Friday, 3 September 2021

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress opened on Friday in a hybrid format, attracting thousands of in-person and virtual participants. Highlights of the day included:

- French President Emmanuel Macron offering inspirational opening remarks, including the need to reinvent trade policies to be consistent with climate and biodiversity policies, as well as setting an international agenda for global public assets;
- An impressive opening ceremony, featuring high-level politicians and artists, where many participants stressed the interconnectedness of environmental challenges; and
- The convening of four summits, focusing on Indigenous Peoples, youth, local actors, and the private sector, which led to interesting discussions on the best way to move from commitments to action.

### Opening Ceremony

Asha Sumpth, media personality, opened the session, followed by a series of artistic performances.

Zhang Xinsheng, IUCN President, noted urgent calls by scientists to safeguard nature's benefits or pay a terrible price. He recognized the value of gender equity and urged addressing the imbalance in how societies share access to nature.

Audrey Azoulay, Director-General, UNESCO, highlighted the need to protect 30% of the planet between now and 2030, and to reinforce the role of nature education in school curricula, calling for more women in science.

Li Keqiang, Premier Minister of the People's Republic of China, emphasized China's prioritization of sustainable development based on harmony between man and nature. He said it is essential, in the post-COVID-19 recovery, to promote multilateralism, nature-based solutions, and a circular economy.

David Ige, Governor, State of Hawai'i, reiterated Hawai'i's commitment to implementing the 2030 marine and conservation goals, stressing that the island state sits squarely on the forefront of climate change.



**Emmanuel Macron**, President of France, and **Harrison Ford**, Actor and Vice-Chair, Conservation International's Board of Directors

Benoît Payan, Mayor of Marseille, France, said while cities are at the forefront of protecting biodiversity, they have become “custodians of a garden that is dying.” He noted Jacques Chirac once stated, “our house is on fire,” qualifying this by saying “our house is still on fire, and we continue to stoke the flames.” He said the “hubris of our humanity” means the planet has reached its limit. He stressed building resilient cities, including through rethinking ecosystems and agriculture, and urged that humanity be put ahead of the profits.

In an interactive session, Emmanuel Macron, President of France, noted that the climate is inextricably linked to the preservation of biodiversity and ecosystems, with upcoming meeting agendas further cementing this linkage.

Moderator Barbara Pompili, Minister of the Ecological Transition, France, said the IUCN World Conservation Congress must place ecosystem conservation at the heart of a post-COVID-19 world. She emphasized that all countries must share the responsibility to develop a new post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Sebastião Salgado, Brazilian social documentary photographer and photojournalist, noted the world depends on the Amazon for its enormous concentration of biodiversity and important carbon capture and sequestration function.



**Audrey Azoulay**, UNESCO Director-General



**Benoît Payan**, Mayor of Marseille



**Sebastião Salgado**, Brazilian social documentary photographer and photojournalist

Lamenting its poor state due to, among others, turning forests into agricultural land, he called for: a planetary ban on Amazon wood products; electrification of Amazonian indigenous areas using renewable energy; and a fair-trade system based on non-predatory economic models.

Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President, European Commission, bemoaned the considerable loss of biodiversity globally, particularly in forest ecosystems, but expressed hope that this can be turned around by: sharing scientific knowledge; acting in an integrated manner; and working at the local, national, and international levels to re-establish the lost balance among ecological, economic, and social interests.

Mahamadou Issoufou, former President of Niger, highlighted how humanity is living on borrowed time with the ecological debt to future generations increasing daily. He stated that despite not having significant responsibility for environmental degradation, the African Union takes action to address it, focusing especially on the Great Green Wall initiative.

Christine Lagarde, President, European Central Bank, said financial and economic stability is impossible without nature and ecosystem services. She highlighted that humanity's reliance on oxygen, water, and nourishing food is undervalued and frequently excluded in economic assessments. She noted biodiversity bolsters the resilience of societies and economies, and highlighted nature-based solutions to address climate change.

Gilbert Hounbo, President, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), called for reorienting climate funding and harmonizing the way data is measured. He suggested that at a minimum, 30% of climate funding should be earmarked for investments in biodiversity.

Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Prime Minister, Greece, highlighted various threats facing the Mediterranean Sea, including marine pollution and unsustainable fishing and transport. Outlining various national priorities, he committed to reducing overfishing, declaring that, by 2030, 10% of territorial seas will be 'no take' reserves.

Highlighting the European Green Deal, Charles Michel, President, European Council, called for banning single-use plastics; urged for increasing the number of protected areas; and highlighted the important role the polar ice caps play in climate control.

Emmanuel Macron, President of France, stressed that the destinies of humanity, climate, and nature are inseparable, and noted that the economic impact of nature is underestimated.

On protection of living soils, President Macron highlighted ongoing initiatives and focused on pesticides, noting that non-chemical substitutes and resistance plants can phase out pesticides, while maintaining competitiveness.



**Kyriakos Mitsotakis**, Prime Minister of Greece

On forests, he called for a clear strategy to fight against 'imported deforestation,' focusing on specific products that are currently produced unsustainably, including soybeans and palm oil.

On the ocean, President Macron emphasized the fight against plastic, stressing the need to prevent plastic pollution, including via educational activities. He drew attention to the North and South Poles, highlighting the need for an international legal agenda on global public assets. On instruments and methodology, he called for an agenda which would provide a common measurement on biodiversity, which is clear and transparent to put pressure on financiers to protect biodiversity. He concluded with the need to reinvent trade policies to be consistent with climate and biodiversity policies, expressing optimism that the continuous fight for a sustainable future will lead to success.

Harrison Ford, Actor and Vice-Chair, Conservation International's Board of Directors, urged people to cry out for justice, mother nature, Indigenous Peoples, marginalized communities, and all the planet's inhabitants. "By preserving just a fraction of the earth's irreplaceable ecosystems," he said, "we can protect our wildlife, air, water, food, jobs, and climate." He added, "please remember, reinforcements are on the way. They're sitting in lecture halls now, venturing into the field for the very first time, leading marches, organizing communities, but, they're not here yet. In a few years, they will be here, in rooms like this, and the world will be better for it."

The opening ceremony concluded with President Macron officially declaring the IUCN World Conservation Congress open.

### ***World Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nature***

Felix Sarazua, Asociación SOTZ'IL, opened the summit with a spiritual invocation.

Bruno Oberle, Director General, IUCN, expressed hope that humanity will incorporate indigenous knowledge to achieve the SDGs. Aroha Mead, Biological Heritage National Science Challenge, said this inaugural summit marks a milestone in recognizing Indigenous Peoples contributions and expertise. Béangère Abba, Secretary of State for Biodiversity, France, highlighted the importance of fully involving Indigenous Peoples in promoting the 30-by-30 global biodiversity target.

Jenny Springer, IUCN, highlighted IUCN's full support of Indigenous Peoples, including by facilitating exchanges and funding indigenous-led programmes. Kanyinke Sena, Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC), Kenya, described the benefits of IUCN membership, encouraging African and Asian Indigenous Peoples organizations to join. Kristen Walker-Painemilla, IUCN,



Diana Garlytska, CoalitionWILD, Lithuania

highlighted a proposal at the IUCN Congress to have an Indigenous member in an elected position on the IUCN Council.

Francisco Calí Tzay, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, highlighted Indigenous Peoples' vulnerability, but also their resilience to climate change. Lucy Mulenkei, International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, drew attention to the Forum's recommendations for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Walter Quertehuari Dariquebe, Amarakaeri Communal Reserve, described efforts that conserved more than 98 % of their Amazonian forest area.

Andrea Carmen, International Indian Treaty Council, shared solutions like seed trading, revitalizing trade routes, and traditional irrigation methods. Aissatou Dicko, IPACC, presented a Burkina Faso study on intergenerational knowledge, allowing pastoralists to adapt to climate change.

Ramiro Batzin, Asociación SOTZ'IL, presented the IPO-developed Global Indigenous Agenda, with five themes, including promoting indigenous solutions to the climate crisis, and influencing post-COVID-19 agendas to improve indigenous security and livelihoods. Noelani Lee, Ka Honua Momona, led a call to action, *inter alia*, for: States to recognize indigenous leadership; the private sector to provide funding; and academia to value traditional knowledge. Stewart Maginnis, IUCN, reiterated IUCN's strong support. Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, CEO and Chairperson, Global Environment Facility (GEF), committed to expanding indigenous participation in the eighth GEF replenishment (GEF-8). Stig Traavik, Norway, highlighted support for programmes protecting indigenous rights and livelihoods. Kathryn Isom-Clouse, US, outlined her government's support for tribal-led initiatives.



Bruno Oberle, Director General, IUCN

José Gregorio Díaz Mirabal, COICA, closed with a cry of losing hope and for promises to be fulfilled; and Solomon Kaho-ohalahala offered an invocation.

### Global Youth Summit

The IUCN Global Youth Summit (GYS) was moderated by Camila Perez Gabilondo, IUCN, and Hannah Moosa, Forum Deputy Manager, Switzerland.

Diana Garlytska, CoalitionWILD, emphasized the need to effectively include youth in negotiations and in the blueprint for action on targets such as legal personhood, green jobs, and biodiversity response.

Bruno Oberle, Director General, IUCN, urged transforming society with the passion of youth and the wisdom of indigenous communities. Barbara Pompili, Minister of the Ecological Transition, France, emphasized the urgent need for decarbonized energy and for changing societal attitudes to green energy.

Shamila Nair-Bedouelle, Assistant Director General, UNESCO, highlighted the need for primary education on climate change. Brighton Kaoma, Director, UN SDSN Youth, underscored generational inequity and lamented a lack of political will. Alisi Rabukawaqa, IUCN, called for increased economic activities for youth in the Global South. Ron Hallman, President and CEO, Parks Canada, encouraged making life-long commitments to conservation.

During the panel on "Anchoring the GYS Outcome: Looking to the Future," Jayathma Wickramanayake, UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, highlighted the need for dedicated funding to ensure youth and impacted community participation in environmental decision-making bodies. Sarah Hanson, Youth4Nature, stated that involving people from different backgrounds will allow their diverse perspectives to shape multiple solutions. Johanna Lissinger Peitz, Ambassador for Stockholm+50, Sweden, showcased efforts to strengthen youth participation in national delegations, working groups, and informal consultations.

The virtual panel, "Rallying Youth Voices for Biodiversity," gave updates on the GYS Outcome Statement, with Manal Bidar, Morocco, reiterating the need for capacity building and knowledge sharing so the "youth can become the leaders the future needs."

Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands urged young people to be "revolutionary" and for leaders to include youth on the main stage to ensure tangible change.

The 1 Million Youth Action Challenge (1MYAC) initiative was presented and three 1MYAC Ambassadors addressed the Summit. Donnley Clive Omondi, Kenya, noted the SDGs provide a blueprint for a sustainable future and said it is the youth's collective duty to implement them. Juan Sebastián Avella Dallos, Colombia, said 1MYAC is a movement of empowerment and action. Insaf Adelmoula, Tunisia, stressed the need to move from words to action in order to build a sustainable future.

The Summit closed with music and art presentations from AY Young and Alex Basaraba, respectively.

### IUCN Local Action Summit

IUCN President Zhang Xincheng highlighted the organization's work on integrating nature with urban environments and stressed that subnational governments are essential to the success of the conservation agenda.

Emmanuelle Wargon, Minister for Housing, France, highlighted regional-level synergies of action, the territorial preservation of nature, and local ecological transition contracts.

Nicolas Furet, Secretary General, Citeo, shared public and private entity experiences aimed at designing lighter, recyclable eco-packaging.

Bruno Oberle, Director General, IUCN, called for transformational change involving infrastructure, services, investment, and behavior; and highlighted the role of all stakeholders in achieving this change.

In a panel discussion on financing the green recovery, panelists called for: a nature-positive economic system; sustainable investment in nature and ecosystem services; mechanisms to deliver investment to subnational authorities; and inclusion of local communities.

Regarding the deployment of nature-based solutions, panelists emphasized that: these solutions are key to addressing climate change and biodiversity loss, and also underpin post COVID-19 recovery. They further highlighted local authorities as essential actors for protecting biodiversity, and for linking scientists, citizens, and politicians.

On environmental rights, panelists discussed: the need for the UN Human Rights Council to recognize the right to a healthy environment; the 'Nature for All' initiative; and the role of local authorities and communities in ensuring environmental human rights.

Regarding advancing ecological urbanism, panelists highlighted: tensions between more green spaces and vibrant functional neighborhoods; the Urban Nature Lab as well as the Urban Nature Index; and Canada's National Urban Parks programme.

Local Action Summit participants focused on action pledges. Mayors and regional leaders presented actions within their cities, highlighting efforts to: boost biodiversity and native species; rehabilitate the green areas of Tunis; "green" Genoa's port; and address the plastics scourge in Île-de-France's coast. They also called for a new urban plan, and cooperation in advancing climate change mitigation and protecting nature.

In closing remarks, Bérangère Abba, Secretary of State for Biodiversity, France, highlighted the role of local authorities in protecting the environment and called on all stakeholders to work together.

### ***IUCN CEO Summit***

The CEO summit brought together business leaders from around the world to discuss ideas and initiatives to address the urgent and inextricably linked biodiversity and climate change crises.

Robyn Seetal, IkTaar Sustainability, opened the session underscoring the private sector as an essential part of the solution.

Bruno Oberle, Director General, IUCN, stressed that the climate is changing, biodiversity is disappearing, and both are crucial for humanity's survival. He emphasized that businesses "could achieve the best result with limited resources."

Barbara Pompili, Minister of the Ecological Transition, France, highlighted the private sector's role, calling for increasing green private investment and stressing companies' ability to influence their partners and suppliers towards a sustainable pathway.

Three panel discussions ensued. The first panel, moderated by Alan Jope, CEO, Unilever, focused on safeguarding nature across value chains and comprised: Florence Jeantet, World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD); Marie-Claire Daveu, Kering; Madgi Batato, Nestlé; Adrien Geiger, L'Occitane Group; Rodolphe Saade, CEO, CMA CGM; and Solange Bankiaky-Badji, Rights and Resources Group. Participants stressed: their respective environmental initiatives and commitments; the economic importance of protecting nature; and that a collective approach is needed to change the current paradigm.

The second panel, moderated by Jennifer Morris, CEO, The Nature Conservancy, focused on creating new business models and opportunities. The panel comprised Jean-Bernard Lévy, CEO, Electricité de France; Jean-Pierre Clamadieu, Engie; Harry Brekelmans, Shell; Helle Kristoffersen, TotalEnergies; and Antoine Frerot, CEO, Veolia. Participants stressed the need for innovation and collaboration to strengthen existing initiatives and create new ones. They showcased plans for climate transition, and discussed relevant objectives and metrics.

The third panel, moderated by Peter Bakker, CEO, WBCSD, discussed ways to enable a nature-positive future, moving from commitment to action. The panel comprised Alexandre Ricard, Pernot Ricard; Antoine Arnault, LVMH; Nancy Tembo, Minister of Forestry and Natural Resources, Malawi; Kathy Abusow, CEO, Sustainable Forestry Initiative; Geoffroy Roux de Bezieux, Medef; and Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, CEO and Chairperson, GEF. Participants discussed their initiatives, including regenerative practices and environmental education activities; exchanged ideas on establishing a carbon price to provide a clear signal for change; and addressed the political, economic, and governance aspects of the environmental crisis.



Congress Opening Reception