

IUCN World Conservation Congress Highlights: Thursday, 9 September 2021

During a very busy penultimate day of the IUCN Congress, Members and participants attended three Assembly Sittings, continuing their work into the evening. They heard reports from two Summits; engaged in two strategic discussions; discussed the process for review of new and urgent motions; and approved nine motions, including one on governance.

Highlights of the day included:

- Eight approved motions, including on planning of maritime areas and biodiversity and geodiversity conservation, protecting environmental defenders, and strengthening sustainable tourism's role in biodiversity conservation;
- Two strategic discussions on post-COVID-19 recovery and culture; and
- A vibrant exchange of views on the process for review of new and urgent motions.

Fourth Sitting

President Xinsheng Zhang welcomed Members and participants. Vice President Malik Amin Aslam Khan chaired the morning session.

Discussion of Issues of Strategic Importance for the Union and Reports from the Summits

Report on the Results of the World Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nature: Two regional Indigenous Peoples representatives presented results from the World Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nature, highlighting the historic new categorization of Members within IUCN, and that through regional consultations, there is now an agenda for governance, participation, and investment opportunities.

Structuring Economies in a Post-COVID-19 World: Angela Andrade-Pérez, Conservation International, opened the strategic discussion, stating the world faces a basic challenge: how to generate economic opportunities in this emergency, but in a careful, thoughtful way.

Oh Il Young, IUCN, presented initiatives being implemented by the Republic of Korea for a nature-based recovery, including, a Green New Deal, 2050 Carbon Neutrality Declaration, and a green taxonomy and public disclosure requirements for private finance.

Hédi Chébili, Ministry of Local Affairs and the Environment, Tunisia, highlighted pandemic-related challenges, but also stressed positive developments, including regeneration of flora and fauna in certain ecosystems, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

Andrea Athanas, African Wildlife Foundation, recalled the 1961 Arusha Manifesto, which set the agenda for the survival of wildlife, stressing that the world has collectively failed, degrading the planet towards existential crisis. She urged “investing in nature as if it matters,” making productive systems work for both people and nature, and putting people at the center of all activities.

Sonia Peña Moreno, IUCN, highlighted the IUCN Nature-based Recovery Initiative aiming to ensure the post-COVID-19 recovery is nature-positive. On challenges, she highlighted a lack of: political will, knowledge about how investing in nature can support recovery, and awareness about what constitutes investing in nature.

During the discussion, Members highlighted: the pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities and vulnerabilities; unequal distribution of vaccines is delaying economic recovery in vulnerable countries; collaboration between the CBD and other international organizations is needed to develop performance indicators; IUCN should help develop tools to support actors in designing and implementing effective nature-based solutions; natural areas should be devolved to their original owners, the Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs); and the One Health approach is relevant to both the public and private sectors.

Reports of the IUCN Commissions

Jon Paul Rodríguez, Chair, IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC), delivered the report of the Commission, highlighting structure and governance, and major achievements. He noted, *inter alia*, that: the Commission's mandate was updated; membership increased by 26% in the period 2017-2021; and ten intervention letters were delivered to governments and companies in 2021, with three having a positive impact. He highlighted ongoing work on three new centers for species survival, with six more in discussion.



Oh Il Young, IUCN



Kristen Walker-Painemilla, Chair, CEESP



Antonio Benjamin, Chair, WCEL

On major achievements, he cited 200 Species Green Status assessments and nearly 77,000 Red List assessments and reassessments. He also introduced the award recipients for the: Sir Peter Scott Award for Conservation Merit; George Rabb Award for Conservation Innovation; Harry Messel Award for Conservation Leadership; and SSC Chair Citation of Excellence 2019.

Antonio Benjamin, Chair, World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL), delivered the Commission's report, highlighting increased gender balance in both the Congress Steering Committee (CSC) and the Commission's membership. He lauded the achievements of WCEL's 10 Specialist Groups; the global Congress, split into regional hybrid events due to the pandemic; WCEL's lecture series and Environmental Week; the Global Judicial Institute for the Environment; and the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law. He noted judges are beginning to recognize governance principles and concluded with a tribute to environmental defenders.

Kristen Walker-Painemilla, Chair, Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP), reported on the Commission's work in two areas: Natural Resource Governance Framework, and People and Nature.

She highlighted several activities and achievements, including the #BuildBackBetter CEESP Virtual Dialogues Series, which engaged Members on solutions to overcoming the challenges of COVID-19; establishing the Global Rights and Governance Programme to advance the rights and roles of Indigenous Peoples in conservation; and Youth and intergenerational engagement. In closing, Walker led Members in holding flowers and observing a moment of silence for at least 331 environmental defenders killed globally in 2020.

The discussion considered: investing in vulnerable fishing communities' resilience; ecocide being an act or omission; and the private sector's role in exacerbating climate vulnerabilities.

Fifth Sitting

Vice President John Robinson welcomed Members and provided an overview of the schedule.

Discussion of Issues of Strategic Importance for the Union and Reports from the Summits

Report on the Results of the CEOs Summit: Gerard Bos, IUCN, focused on key messages, outcomes, and future actions. He stressed the Summit's objective to "ensure business and the

private sector are not only on the menu, but also at the table." He highlighted key themes: safeguarding nature across value chains; creating new business models and opportunities; and enabling a nature-positive future. Bos highlighted commitments to action announced by CEOs during the Summit and stressed IUCN has convening power for radical collaborations to spark innovation for new business models. He noted that Marseille shall be remembered as the IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC) where businesses were welcomed as solution providers.

Building a Culture of Conservation Through New Alliances and Strengthening the Agency of Key Actors: Moderator Sean Southey, President, Zamia Media, stressed the need to build a conservation culture through alliances and partnerships.

Artists Kevin Chang and Kalama Cabigon sang "Hawai'i 78," highlighting the Hawaiian motto "Ua mau ke ea o ka 'āina, i ka pono," roughly translated as "the life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness."

Southey said that culture is "like the seed in a forest; it is local, not top down, and through it, society can be a guardian of nature." Margaret Otieno, Wildlife Clubs of Kenya, through childhood stories of nature, demonstrated the importance of youth education on nature to foster leadership in conservation. Jessica Sweidan, Synchronicity Earth, via video, considered that diversity creates potential and maximizes resilience.

Xiye Bastida, Re-Earth Initiative, highlighted that the movement to increase protected areas does not help IPLCs if it effectively takes land away from them. She added that the key to successful conservation efforts is diversity.

Jon Paul Rodriguez, IUCN, moderated the ensuing panel discussion. Helen Crowley, Kering, reiterated the principles of empathy, transparency, and collaboration. Valérie Verdier, CEO, French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development, stressed the importance of increased collaboration with Francophones.

Francisco Ramiro Batzin, Asociación SOTZ'IL, Guatemala, commented, via video, that society should live by "I am you and you are me" values, and respect free, prior and informed consent, and IPLCs.

Swetha Stotra Bhashyam, Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN), lamented that "youth are tired of seeing the same problems with the same broken promises," stressing that GYBN prioritizes justice through rights-based approaches, space for alliances, and increased empathy for all living beings.



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

On recommendations to realize a global culture of conservation and care, panelists highlighted: relating nature to one's own life, focusing on local efforts, harnessing technology to combine western and indigenous knowledge, and rebuilding trust through honesty.

Kristen Walker-Painemilla, IUCN and Conservation International, noted the first step in reimagining conservation is to listen, and challenged everyone to co-create the future we need. Delegates voted "consumption" as the most important issue needing reimagining.

Report of the Programme Committee and Adoption of the Draft Addendum to the IUCN Programme 2021–2024

Robinson introduced a draft Addendum (CGR-2021-5.4/1-Rev) to IUCN Programme 2021–2024, a companion document to address the broader implications of the pandemic and human health on the Programme.

The International Council of Environmental Law observed tools already exist to prevent future pandemics and spillovers, and urged using them.

African Wildlife Foundation suggested an amendment in Section 3.1.2. ("People, health and conservation") from "no risk" to "no significant risk" of pathogen spillover, saying zero risk is neither feasible nor necessarily desirable, as it could alienate people from nature. Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) opposed, saying "no risk" is simply aspirational language and should be kept even if unfeasible. Robinson put the proposed amendment to a vote, and Members voted to allow the amendment. Following a second vote, the Addendum was approved as amended.

Report on the Meeting of All Recognized National and Regional Committees

Chris Mahon and Ann-Katrine Garn, Chair and Secretary, respectively, of the IUCN Global Group for National and Regional Committee Development, reported on the Global Meeting of IUCN National and Regional Committee Representatives and Country Focal Points, which took place virtually on 3 September 2021. They said recorded presentations of initiatives from six regions were shown. Tom Brooks, IUCN's Chief Scientist, addressed how the



Ann-Katrine Garn, Secretary, IUCN Global Group for National and Regional Committee Development

Contributions for Nature platform can capture information from Members' projects. They highlighted the creation of IUCN's first inter-regional committee, comprising Europe, North Asia, and Central Asia. They also announced the Global Group's message to the WCC: "collaboration is key for conservation," and said the Group will place an item on "reimagine nature" on the agenda of the Group's next meeting.

In the subsequent discussion, Members: highlighted the need to engage policymakers and governments to foster their interest in IUCN's work; urged IUCN to produce a statement calling on governments to create space for people working on natural resources or biodiversity; and proposed creating an inter-regional committee for Asia, West Asia, and Oceania.

Angela Andrade-Pérez, Chair, Commission on Ecosystem Management, delivered the report of the Commission. She noted the Commission now includes climate change; comprises 16 thematic areas, 12 specialist areas and five working groups; is present in 14 regions; and has 2,000 members. Highlights included the publication of over 90 scientific articles and academic papers, and work on ecosystem-based adaptation. Andrade described the Red List of Ecosystems as a flagship project, explaining it had produced more than 25 national evaluations and guides for the application of the Red List of Ecosystems. She further discussed: work focusing on ecosystem restoration and developing guides on eco-disaster risk reduction; newer work on cultural practices and ecosystem management; and the establishment of a rewilding group.

Sean Southey, Chair, Commission on Education and Communication, announced the attainment of the 2,000 membership mark. He highlighted achievements including the #NatureForAll Discovery Zone, which aims to disseminate resources that make it easier for people to connect with nature virtually. He further highlighted the Nature Storybook Toolkit implemented with CEESP, announcing the first video competition award winner, Alejandra Torrez Tarqui from Bolivia. Another collaboration with CEESP, he noted, is the Reimagine Conservation Campaign, which aims to inspire a love for nature in people.

On youth engagement, he mentioned, among others, the Virtual Global Youth Summit held in April 2021, the Nature for Youth Oasis at the 2021 IUCN WCC, and the IUCN Youth Strategy to be launched in January 2022.

Process for Review of New and Urgent Motions

Vice President Robinson provided a statement from the CSC on the process for review of new and urgent motions, and provided an overview of the appeals and the reasons for their rejection.

The NRDC, on a motion addressing future pandemics and biodiversity loss, said under Rule 55 on quorum and voting, Members can overturn the CSC's decision. Members voted on whether to overturn the appellants' rejection; the vote was unsuccessful. Robinson further clarified that the vote did not consider the content of the motion, but rather whether to overturn a matter of process.

The Center for Environmental Ethics and Law proposed a motion, requesting the presiding officer of the WCC to establish the means to, among others: provide and make public the names of the CSC members and the minutes of the meetings; the details of approvals and the specific reasons for rejections; and call on the new Council to consider making the motions process fairer and more equitable.

The General Counsel clarified that the names are public as the CSC members are selected during the Assembly's first sitting. Noting that reasons for and clarification of rejections is possible, she cautioned against the full minutes of meetings being released as CSC members should be allowed to deliberate without fear of recrimination. Robinson affirmed IUCN is a transparent organization and the information is available, adding that the process is not faceless.

Stop Ecocide International requested a vote on whether to overturn their rejected motion on establishing ecocide as an international crime. Members did not overturn the rejection.

Sixth Sitting

Process for Review of New and Urgent Motions

Vice President Robinson opened the floor for further discussion on the process for review of new and urgent motions. Surya Subedi, Legal Procedural Adviser, opined that the review process is democratic, transparent, and that having to provide detailed explanations for all decisions taken by the CSC would be too heavy a burden.

NRDC tabled a motion requesting the IUCN Council to "undertake a full evaluation of the process for consideration, review, approval or rejection, appeal, and action by the Congress under Rule 55, of new and urgent motions under consideration by the WCC and make recommendations for



Enrique Lahmann, IUCN

changes in the procedures and statutes as necessary. The Council should consult the membership on lessons learned from the Marseille Congress and convene an online discussion process on any proposed recommended changes."

The Law and Environmental Economy Institute stated that the CSC's reason against the motions as "not urgent" is insufficient, and detailed rationale or minutes from the committees should be shared.

The International Council of Environmental Law added that in the past, minutes were taken by the CSC, meaning it is doable.

Update on Progress of Discussion in Contact Groups, and Discussion and Vote on Motions

Jon Paul Rodríguez, Chair, Resolutions Committee, provided updates on pending motions, noting that 11 are still under discussion in contact groups.

He observed that seven motions were ready for voting. Delegates voted and approved:

- Planning of maritime areas and biodiversity and geodiversity conservation;
- Protecting environmental human and peoples' rights defenders and whistleblowers;
- Strengthening the protection of primary and old-growth forests in Europe and facilitating their restoration where possible;
- Strengthening sustainable tourism's role in biodiversity conservation and community resilience;
- Ensuring adequate funding for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species;
- Call to withdraw draft-permit mining of fossil fuels underneath UNESCO World Heritage Site Wadden Sea; and
- Protecting the Okavango from oil and gas exploitation.

Rodríguez reported that after the conclusion of the contact group on Motion 132 (Controlling and monitoring trade in croaker swim bladders to protect target croakers and reduce incidental catches of threatened marine megafauna), GERMANY sent a message suggesting changes. GERMANY proposed deleting two references to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), saying the IUCN Director-General and SSC have no competence to amend CITES listings. Motion co-sponsors opposed. Robinson asked the Members to vote on GERMANY's proposed deletions. Members voted and disapproved. MEXICO suggested a correction in the first line of the motion, noting the correct IUCN Red List category of totoaba croaker is Vulnerable, not Critically Endangered. As this involved a correction, Robinson noted there was no need for a vote. Members then voted and approved the motion.

Amran Hamzah, IUCN Governance Committee, reported that of the remaining seven governance motions, three were ready for voting. Members voted and approved the motion 'Establishment of operating rules and oversight of National, Regional and Interregional Committees.'

On Motion K (improvements to the motions process to put a cap on the number of abstentions in order for a motion to be adopted), Hamzah said the contact group reached consensus to withdraw the motion. Following a vote, the Assembly decided to withdraw the motion.

Regarding Motion L (Improvements to the motions process regarding the majority required to adopt motions), Members voted to defer to Council for further consideration.