

## IUCN World Conservation Congress Highlights: Sunday, 5 September 2021

The Forum continued in full force during the third day of the IUCN World Conservation Congress with a plethora of sessions on the thematic areas of the Congress.

Highlights of the day included:

- A lengthy, interactive session on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF), providing potential inputs on different segments of the framework;
- An emotive session on environmental defenders, stressing that a record number of 331 have been killed in 2020, more than half of them in Latin America; and
- A high-level panel offering valuable insights on how high ambition targets for protected areas can be achieved.

### *Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework: A Recipe for Success*

This four-hour session focused on the post-2020 GBF, which is under negotiation by Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Taking place just after the conclusion of the third meeting of the relevant CBD Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG), the highly interactive session aimed to ensure that the draft framework is “fit-for-purpose” to tackle the nature emergency, achieving necessary transformational change with concrete implementation steps.

Moderator Jane Smart, IUCN, opened the session, outlining its format and stressing that the session’s outputs will inform the Marseille Manifesto, the main Congress’s outcome document. She focused on the meetings of the OEWG, outlining challenging topics, including resource mobilization.

IUCN Director General Bruno Oberle emphasized that “we have a unique and final opportunity to fix the problem.” Noting the complexity of biodiversity-related issues, he underscored that negotiators must feel the political pressure for a successful result. He emphasized the need to reduce the pressure on

natural resources and reinvest in nature. He added efforts will be fruitless unless they are accompanied by effective resource mobilization. Oberle noted the need to clarify who will provide the funds; whether public or private money will be utilized and what the balance between the two would be; and what kind of funding channels will be used.

Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, CEO and Chairperson, Global Environment Facility (GEF), said that while planning for the GBF, there is a need to continue analyzing the Aichi Targets, especially what did not work. He emphasized that our major institutional failure is one of the main reasons for our collective inability to address the biodiversity crisis. He highlighted that, contrary to other sectors like education or health, too many agencies manage natural resources, and thus called for an institutional landscape approach. He concluded by saying, “if we are smart and understand the political and economic entry points, I am optimistic that we will be nature-positive by 2030 and on track to be carbon-neutral and pollution-free.”

Marco Lambertini, Director General, WWF International, underlined that this is our last chance and there is no room for compromise, urging for science-based action. He stressed the need to understand the consequences of the planetary emergency, not only on the natural world, but also on our lives, economy, society, and health. He explained that one-third of the global workforce depends on healthy ecosystems, noting advancements in our understanding of the importance of connecting the environment and development agendas. Lambertini highlighted that the required transition does not only entail risks, but also opportunities; while avoiding collapse, humanity has an opportunity to promote sustainable and equitable growth. He emphasized that “we must focus on what is necessary, not what is politically negotiable,” and hold leaders responsible to step up ambition at the needed level. He urged maintaining the 30x30 goal of protecting 30% of the planet by 2030; agreeing on the implementation mechanism;



Jane Smart, IUCN



Marco Lambertini, Director General, WWF International



**Martha Rojas Urrego**, Secretary-General, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

and focusing on 2030, rather than “kicking commitments further down the road.”

Martha Rojas Urrego, Secretary-General, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, presented on the role of biodiversity-related conventions in the GBF. She stressed that “an unprecedented crisis requires unprecedented efforts to turn the tide.” While noting that cooperation can be challenging as each convention has its own universe, she emphasized “we are all working towards the same objective.” She suggested aligning relevant conventions’ strategic plans; developing collaborative work programmes and strengthening existing synergies; and using common sets of indicators to measure progress. She concluded stressing that the GBF should be a framework for all, including biodiversity-related conventions, while avoiding duplication of efforts.

Participants discussed ways to formalize collaboration on the programmes of work of biodiversity-related conventions; ways to engage the public and provide a broader narrative; and China’s positions and initiatives as the host country of the forthcoming CBD COP15. They gathered in 11 breakout groups to discuss how to strengthen language on elements of the GBF and then reported back on key messages.

On synergies among the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), proposals included explicitly recognizing global and regional MEAs as key implementation mechanisms for the GBF.

On 2050 goals and 2030 milestones, recommendations included: on goals, zero extinction by 2050 across all taxonomic groups and securing integrity of all ecosystems by 2050; and on milestones, net gain in area connectivity and integrity of natural ecosystems by at least 30%.

On the relationship between elements of the GBF and national-level implementation, the group proposed: including reference to disaggregating the global targets at the national level and making them context-specific; including incentives to define and implement national targets; aligning reporting mechanisms and complementarity with other processes; and concrete measures to ensure the implementation of global targets at the national level.

On tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming, suggestions included clarifying the meaning of biodiversity “values,” how these are measured and how to capture non-monetary values; emphasizing sectoral approaches, including a roadmap, clear trajectory and criteria, sectoral



**Carlos Manuel Rodriguez**, CEO and Chairperson, GEF

regulation, and binding targets; and considering how to measure dependency and impacts of business on biodiversity.

On the vision and mission statement: the group proposed including, as a vision, that by 2050, biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored, and wisely used; and as a mission, to take urgent action across society to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity, and ensure the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits of the use of genetic resources.

On the views and role of stakeholders, including Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and civil society, the suggestions were to: include more ambitious wording on free, prior, and informed consent; adopt a human rights-based approach; and add language on inclusion of civic spaces as an enabling condition.

On protected areas, participants proposed: designating at least 30% of the Earth by 2030 as protected areas, while recognizing that as much as 50% may be required; and including freshwater resources.

On a monitoring framework, the group suggested adopting one alongside goals and targets.

On action targets for 2030, participants suggested including biodiversity-positive spatial explicit plans targeting ecosystems connectivity and key biodiversity areas, as well as recognizing protection mechanisms for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs).

On reducing threats to biodiversity, the group called for inclusivity when discussing species by using fauna, flora, fungi, and other organisms, and including in the preamble reasons why species should be integrated in the GBF. Increasing ambition with explicit reference to zero extinction was also suggested.

On meeting people’s needs through sustainable use and benefit sharing, recommendations included: improving reference to cultural and spiritual drivers, and reasons for nature conservation; referencing equity, diversity, and inclusion more explicitly; and clearly referencing nature-based solutions.

Mechtild Rössler, Director, World Heritage Centre, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, gave reflections on the breakout room reports, focusing on mainstreaming tools and solutions, and learning from past failures. She said the framework should be aligned, with clear leadership and a focus on implementation. She added that her office will be aligning this work with the coming conventions in China and that the key outcomes should be included in the Marseille Manifesto.



**Bérangère Abba**, Secretary of State for Biodiversity, France

During concluding questions and remarks, many participants focused on the potential for targets to be overloaded, which some said could weaken them, and suggested a separate set of indicators to measure success and focus on implementation. Several members expressed concern about the waning time to achieve the targets. Smart suggested members contribute outcomes from the breakout rooms and key language into the Marseille Manifesto, progressing work on indicators, and focusing on linkages to biodiversity-related conventions and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

### ***The transition to sustainable agriculture: for people, food, and nature***

The session, co-hosted by IUCN and Food and Land Use Coalition (FOLU), discussed sustainable food production for a growing population, and the importance of including all stakeholders to achieve social, economic, and environmental goals.

Alberto Arroyo Schnell, IUCN, opened the session; Seth Cook, FOLU, moderated. Cook set the context: modern agricultural systems have produced grave impacts like toxicity, pollution, and soil degradation, which are as serious as climate change yet not getting the attention they deserve.

Janez Potočnik, UNEP International Resource Panel, highlighted man's unsustainable relationship with nature resulting from the failure to recognize we are embedded in, not external to, nature. He lamented the "charming mass suicide orchestrated by the invisible hand of markets," and said we must stop confusing consumers by asking them to behave responsibly yet having them pay more if they do. He emphasized that wellbeing and economic development depend on respecting planetary boundaries and treating nature responsibly.

Panelists shared examples of agro-ecological models that work with, not against, nature.

Patricia Zurita, BirdLife International, described initiatives that support Latin American meat producers practicing 800-year-old cultural farming methods that maintain grasslands, and African farmers growing high-quality cocoa without worsening deforestation.

Giulia Di Tommaso, CropLife International, discussed digital precision agriculture, and projects harnessing science and sharing data, to promote soil health and reduce impacts of plant pests.

Dinesh Balam, Watershed Support Services and Activities Network, demonstrated how returning to traditional crops like millet have: developed local economies in Orissa, India; empowered farmers and women collectives; and improved nutrition, while using less inputs.

Sue Pritchard, Food, Farming and Countryside Commission, discussed agro-ecological approaches that eliminate synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, adapt diets, and tackle waste, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions without compromising food security.

Panelists highlighted the need for all stakeholders, particularly young farmers, to support the transition to sustainable agriculture. They discussed transparent, science-based approaches; using data and co-creating knowledge with farmers; emphasizing soil health and regenerative practices; moving from a silo to a systems approach; reconsidering economic models that keep millions in poverty while overusing resources; and promoting behavioral change to increase demand for sustainably produced food. They urged ending perverse subsidies that enable destructive agriculture and promote the cheapening of food and impoverishment of farmers, calling instead for green standards enforced through international trade deals.

Zurita said that innovation does not require more machines and chemicals; it can mean returning to nature and promoting pollinators and healthier soils.

### ***High ambition for protected areas: turning pledges into action***

Moderator Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, CEO and Chairperson, GEF, explained that the session reflects on the challenges for implementing the GBF and how it can be implemented to achieve the 30-by-30 target.

Bérangère Abba, Secretary of State for Biodiversity, France, stated more cross-sectoral information sharing is needed to ensure cooperation and policy coherence, saying policy implementation must be inclusive at all levels.

Andrea Meza Murillo, Minister for Environment and Energy, Costa Rica, outlined plans and challenges related to increasing Costa Rica's marine protected areas (MPAs) from two to 30% this year. She said terrestrial protected areas have catalyzed the green economy and MPAs will do the same for the blue economy.

Ivete Maibaze, Minister of Land and Environment, Mozambique, highlighted that 25% of the country is protected and outlined plans to reach 30%. She presented on activities undertaken in the Gorongosa National Park, including the establishment of community areas.

Kazuaki Hoshino, Ministry of the Environment, Japan, said using other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) will be key to achieve the 30-by-30 target. He noted the Satoyama Initiative's potential role in identifying OECMs.

Aminath Shauna, Minister of Environment, Climate Change, and Technology, Maldives, said nature-based solutions, access to finance and technology, and the sustainable use of marine resources will be critical for the Maldives to achieve 30% of protected areas.

On the role of IUCN in supporting the 30-by-30 target, Bruno Oberle, Director General, IUCN, outlined two main functions: providing data to implement conservation; and

transforming data into standards. He noted this will ensure that protected areas are in the right place, connected, effectively managed, and equitably governed.

Ensuing discussions focused on: how France is working with mega biodiverse regions; integrated finance for nature-based solutions; community-based conservation; challenges experienced by the Maldives to maintain sustainable tuna fisheries due to limited resources; and Japan's vision to improve protected area management effectiveness.

### ***Environmental Defenders: How do we support and mobilize our community to respond more effectively?***

This session focused on environmental defenders and the threats they face, including violence, criminalization, intimidation, and killing. The meeting opened with a traditional blessing from Manari Ushigua, Sapara spiritual leader, joined by indigenous leaders from the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon River Basin (COICA) and a Hawaiian song in memory of the 331 environmental defenders killed in 2020.

Moderator Kristen Walker-Painemilla, IUCN, invited participants to collectively consider how to reduce criminalization of environmental defenders and seek solutions to this urgent problem.

Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, noted that attacks on environmental defenders are underreported and often not investigated or prosecuted. She emphasized that IUCN can help promote protection networks, stressing the need to develop a relevant action plan. She highlighted data collection and awareness raising to systematically protect environmental defenders, providing a robust and inclusive framework.

Gregorio Mirabal, General Coordinator, COICA, urged everyone to remember those who have been killed for defending the environment and called for justice, for the provisions of the Minamata Convention to be upheld and for the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to recognize crimes against nature. Lamenting the recent killings of environmental defenders in Kenya, Winnie Sengwer, Defenders Coalition, Kenya, spoke of her organization's work on protecting the wellbeing and building the capacity of local indigenous community members.

Grethel Aguilar, Deputy Director General, IUCN, questioned progress made toward protecting the rights of environmental defenders, noting more defenders were killed in 2020 than in past years. She called for all projects to include rights of

Indigenous communities and free, prior, and informed consent. Joan Carling, Indigenous Peoples Rights International, drew attention to the Indigenous Peoples that are jailed for traditional practices on their lands. Peter Larsen, University of Geneva, said that environmental professionals beyond the front lines also feel unsafe in their work, and that lines of communication between civil society and governments are eroding. Ernesto Herrera, Reforestamos, discussed the progress made with the Escazu Agreement to provide increased access to information to defend indigenous communities.

Discussions focused on: granting indigenous territories the same level of protection as national parks; facilitating surveillance and funding; and the role of conservation communities in providing safe spaces for meeting and networking. Participants further tabled proposals on strengthening IUCN's engagement, including: establishing an in-house grievance mechanism; providing resources to develop relevant programmes; building capacities to engage with defenders; strengthening rights-based conservation; ensuring that IUCN fully adopts a rights-based approach to conservation; and working collectively with the Human Rights Commission and the special rapporteurs.

### ***Advancing the Outcomes of the World Summit on Indigenous Peoples and Nature***

This session was moderated by Francisco Ramiro Batzin Chojoj, Asociación SOTZ'IL, and Anita Tzec, IUCN, and opened with an invocation. Jenny Springer, IUCN, introduced the session, explaining the aim is to advance the outcome of the World Summit on Indigenous Peoples and Nature. Batzin provided a summary of the Summit, highlighting the need to consider Indigenous Peoples' rights and needs in all conservation discussions.

Panelists called for: protecting Indigenous Peoples' rights when considering the designation of protected areas; protecting Indigenous Peoples' intellectual properties and traditional knowledge; ensuring access to vaccines and food security of Indigenous Peoples; including indigenous voices in policy and decision making; adopting the Global Indigenous Agenda; trust-building efforts with Indigenous Peoples, noting their rights have been violated for years; additional human and financial resources to support implementation of the Agenda; and support for the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples and the concept of indigenous guardianship.

Most panelists urged implementation of the outcome of the Summit, stressing that governments should translate it to rules and regulations, so that it does not become "paper to be filed away." Noelani Lee, Ka Honu Momona, highlighted the motion to renounce the doctrine of discovery. Sara Bó Ché, Guatemala, said indigenous groups should not be criminalized for fighting for their rights. Andrea Carmen, Executive Director, International Indian Treaty Council, called for halting implementation or creation of protected and conservation areas until land tenure issues of Indigenous Peoples are resolved. Francisco Souza, Managing Director, FSC Indigenous Foundation, called for a global pact to have a long-term vision for Indigenous Peoples and their relationship with nature, as well as a global indigenous committee to be in charge of the monitoring and follow up of the Agenda.



Three hundred and thirty one flowers for the 331 environmental defenders that were killed in 2020.