

A publication of the International Institute for Sustainable Development

Wednesday, 8 September 2021 | Online at: enb.iisd.org/biodiversity/IUCN-Congress-2020

IUCN World Conservation Congress Highlights: Tuesday, 7 September 2021

Following four busy and inspirational days of work, the Forum concluded its deliberations. During another bustling day, participants attended thematic sessions and high-level dialogues during the morning. In the afternoon, seven thematic plenaries outlined the main take-home messages from the Forum's discussions, followed by the official Forum closing plenary.

Highlights of the day included:

- An optimistic message coming out of the Forum's closing session, highlighting the potential for the required transformational change, while cautioning that time is running out;
- The convening of seven thematic plenaries in parallel, producing significant conclusions; and
- The announcement that the Forum will publish a manifesto containing its work, organized around core messages on climate, biodiversity, pandemic recovery, and the economy.

Green Finance

Dorothee Herr, IUCN, moderated. Chris Buss, IUCN, noted mobilizing public finance is crucial to upscaling private investments in nature conservation, highlighting the importance of quality assurance mechanisms like the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions (NbS Standard).

Vincent Gradt, Mirova Natural Capital, discussed Mirova's two-pronged approach to securing additional financing for conservation. He explained that the first step reduces project risk to increase mainstream investor confidence, and the second nurtures more innovative funding by supporting small demonstration projects through instruments like the Nature+ Accelerator Fund.

Jurgis Sapijanskas, Global Environment Facility (GEF), shared two complementary workstreams. First, the GEF works with governments to support niche green finance, creating enabling conditions to increase private funding. Second, the GEF helps redirect harmful financial flows to nature-positive outcomes by, *inter alia*, urging companies, investors, and

financial institutions to measure, assess, and disclose their dependencies and impacts on nature under the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures.

Ivo Mulder, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), emphasized that scaling up nature finance requires: increasing blended finance, which reduces risk of unproven and small-scale conservation projects, encouraging private sector funding; developing standardized nature-positive loan contracts that commercial banks can offer clients; and standardizing metrics to unlock institutional investor support.

Margaret Kim, Gold Standard, underscored the need for standards for high environmental integrity, and assessment of impacts through inventory reporting and impact quantification. She highlighted the NbS Standard as a means of ensuring credible progress toward multiple Sustainable Development Goals.

Participants then discussed, among others: gaps in resource mobilization and monitoring capacities in developing countries; the need for robust monitoring, reporting, and verification mechanisms; the potential of Payments for Ecosystem Services; the need for policy coherence and tackling harmful subsidies; and blended finance models for the private sector to commit to NbS in supply chains.

Restoring the Fabric of Nature and Humanity – Peace, Conflict, and Environment in a post-COVID-19 World

Moderator Oli Brown, the Royal Institute of International Affairs, noted the session addresses ways in which conservation can, in conflict areas, foster peace.

Tom Lalampaa, Northern Rangelands Trust, Kenya, said sources of conflict in the Northern Rangelands include ownership of illegal firearms by civilians, diminishing grazing lands, and human-wildlife conflict. Alex Dehgan, CEO, Conservation X Labs, stated investing in conservation is investing in stability, food security, water, and livelihoods.

Prince Mostapha Zaher of Afghanistan, lamenting the civil strife plaguing Afghanistan, emphasized "the environment does not understand politics, but it does understand habitat, and we have to absolutely protect it." Prince Jaime de Bourbon de



Moderator **Dorothee Herr**, IUCN



Tom Lalampaa, Northern Rangelands Trust, Kenya



Stewart Maginnis, IUCN



Jennifer Tauli Corpuz, Nia Tero

Parme, Climate Envoy for the Netherlands, drew attention to the clear link between climate and conflict, saying that climate change could further destabilize conflict areas.

Saleem Ali, University of Delaware, urged using the natural environment and conservation as vehicles to build peace and resolve conflict. Julia Marton-Lefevre, Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture, highlighted it is crucial to build bridges between different communities of practice, such as the spheres of environment and peacebuilding. She added that social and conservation scientists were less willing to collaborate in the past, but are now finding avenues to do so. Marton-Lefevre further recalled the important role education plays in conservation. Lalampaa reiterated, “no conservation organization can run away from peace and security issues,” and underscored wildland restoration can simultaneously allow wildlife to thrive and promote peace.

Concluding the session, panelists answered questions from the audience on, *inter alia*: engaging youth throughout the conservation diplomacy and planning processes; youth education on conservation; and the need for the term “peace park” to truly refer to a meaningful project that works to solve a tangible conflict and boosts conservation.

Nature-based Solutions Partnerships

This session was moderated by Radhika Murti, IUCN. Stewart Maginnis, IUCN, highlighted the Union’s work on NbS, including the NbS Standard launched in 2020. He said partnerships, including with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), academia, and the finance sector, are imperative to ensure NbS deliver on their potential. Guy Ryder, Director-General, International Labour Organization, via video message, stressed that there can be no productive economy or decent work without a healthy planet, noting that jobs depend on preserving ecosystems.

Rémy Rioux, Director-General, French Development Agency (AFD), via video message, highlighted AFD’s commitment to doubling biodiversity financing to EUR 1 billion by 2025. Ania Grobicki, Green Climate Fund, said NbS are complex because they embody multiple values and services, and underlined the importance of partnerships in properly valuing and utilizing these assets.

Kazuaki Hoshino, Ministry of the Environment, Japan, outlined national efforts on ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction and highlighted the publication of a practitioner’s handbook to promote this solution. Gilles Kleitz, AFD, said his organization has decided to make the NbS Standard central to their mainstreaming activities and use it as the main instrument to “green” different sectors.

Jennifer Tauli Corpuz, Nia Tero, highlighted concerns that the momentum behind NbS will put undue pressure on indigenous land, leading to land grabs, and intensify industrial activities. To address these concerns, she proposed, *inter alia*: clarifying the concept of NbS; and developing standards for equitable sharing of monetary and non-monetary benefits with Indigenous Peoples.

Nadine McCormick, World Business Council for Sustainable Development, noted that business, as one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss, must be part of the solution, adding that NbS offer a way to minimize negative impacts on nature and articulate mutual dependencies. She called for breaking down the complexity of NbS and linking it to business and societal needs.

10 Proposals for a Sustainable Planet: Youth Voices for a New Deal for Nature and People

The session was moderated by Christian Schwarzer, Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN). Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Secretariat, stressed that 35% of the global population is under 20 years old, urging them “to clean up the mess previous generations have made.”

Pravali Vangeti, UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Education Programme, focused on activities engaging youth, to preserve nature and culture in tandem. On youth engagement, she highlighted inclusivity and community empowerment.

Calling for meaningful participation for young people, Alicia May Donnellan Barraclough, UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Youth Network, urged moving away from silos and enhancing landscape capacity to provide sustainable livelihoods.

Alexandre Capelli, LVMH, outlined the corporation’s strategy on biodiversity, climate, transparency, and circular economy. Noting the company’s transition from sourcing certified materials towards regenerative agriculture, he provided examples of sustainability-related initiatives and partnerships.

Meriem Bouamrane, UNESCO MAB Secretariat, highlighted global interdependencies and collective challenges, underscoring that young people are necessary for the required transformation. She stressed the need to reconcile conservation and sustainable use, adding that “protected areas are important, but the 30-by-30 goal is meaningless if we continue to destroy the remaining 70%.”

Melina Sakiyama, GYBN, underscored that while a lot of responsibility is put on younger generations as future hope, they are operating without real power and on an ecological debt. She summarized the 10 youth proposals for a sustainable planet, namely: maintaining the integrity of support systems; addressing the root causes of the environmental crisis; regulating and monitoring business activities; mobilizing



Gustavo Fonseca, GEF

resources and equitably distributing them; addressing values and behavior; promoting transformative education; furthering inclusion and empowerment; protecting rights and justice; reconciling with nature; and building alliances and dialogue.

Thematic Closing Plenaries

Knowledge, innovation, and technology: Co-Moderator Ana Rodrigues opened the session, featuring two panels: application of leading evaluation techniques to conservation practice, and conservation knowledge tools and programmes for incentivizing conservation impact.

The first panel featured Penny Langhammer, Re:wild; Samantha Cheng, American Museum of Natural History; David Gill, Duke University; and Bernardo Strassburg, International Institute for Sustainability. Discussion focused on the use of counterfactual techniques—assessing what would have happened without intervention—to monitor the impact of conservation interventions. Panelists found that conservation is highly positive, but more analysis will be needed in the future.

Gustavo Fonseca, GEF, moderated the second panel. Panelists were Philip McGowan, Newcastle University; Elizabeth Bennett, Wildlife Conservation Society; Marc Hockings, University of Queensland; and Bibiana Sucre, Provita. Panelists presented tools developed by IUCN to foster and incentivize further conservation impacts. Tools highlighted included the Species Threat Abatement and Restoration Metric, the Green Status of Species, the Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas, and Reverse the Red.

Rights and Governance: Phoebe Weston, the Guardian, moderated the session, which focused on the rights of vulnerable groups in conservation.

Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC), said just talking about Indigenous Peoples is not meaningful involvement. She emphasized the need for scientists to respect indigenous and local knowledge (ILK). Jose Francisco Cali Tzay, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, opposed the persecution of environmental defenders. Sarah Hanson, Indigenous Youth, Ontario, highlighted the need to recognize Indigenous Peoples' inherent right of belonging to their land.

Elizabeth Mrema, Executive Secretary, CBD, underscored that environmental degradation infringes on the rights of marginalized groups. She highlighted inclusion of IPLC views in the GBF, including through indicators in the monitoring framework. Silje Haugland, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, underlined tenure rights, valuing ILK, and meaningful participation of IPLCs in project implementation.

Discussions highlighted barriers to Indigenous Peoples and youth involvement in the IUCN Congress, specifically registration fees. Participants also noted that conservation should not exclude occupants of the territories and cautioned against land-grabbing projects.

Climate change: Nigel Topping, UK, moderated. Ivete Maibaze, Mozambique, called for cooperation, alignment, and integrated responses to achieve social, economic, climate, and environmental goals.

Jochen Flasbarth, Germany, said recent extreme floods in Germany “will happen everywhere if we don’t act appropriately”; and NbS are necessary to achieve climate neutrality targets.

Rukka Sombolnggi, Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara, Indonesia, urged ceasing criminalization of Indigenous Peoples and the adoption of nature- and people-based solutions.

Nisreen Elsaïm, UN Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change, called for solidarity with the global South, saying solutions must consider livelihoods and justice, otherwise the fight for nature and climate will be futile.

Rohitesh Dhawan, International Council on Mining and Metals, called for clarity around carbon offset rules and enhanced performance standards to ensure nature-positive climate solutions.

Teresa Ribera, Spain, urged embedding science-based biodiversity targets into climate and economic policies.

Andrea Ledward, UK, shared hopes for UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP 26, including: all stakeholders working for just change; mobilizing finance for nature; and embedding nature into decision making. Panelists hoped COP 26 will achieve real, ambitious action.

Economic and financial systems: Moderator Mark Halle, International Institute for Sustainable Development, emphasized that conservation cannot be achieved in an economic system that rewards behavior that destroys nature.

Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UNEP, stressed the need for systemic shifts that converse with the real economy, and understanding that half of global Gross Domestic Product depends on nature.

Ambroise Fayolle, European Investment Bank, said “we are moving in the right direction, but not fast enough.” He shared public banks’ initiatives on climate change and biodiversity, urging breaking silos.

During discussions, Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, CEO and Chairperson, GEF, highlighted the need to address perverse subsidies, mobilize financial resources, and address institutional failures. Handaine Mohamed, IPACC, underscored that, although IPLCs manage 80% of all biodiversity, they are not recognized. Andre Hoffman, MAVA Foundation, emphasized that liberal economics has decided that “short-term profit is more important than humanity’s long-term survival.”

Akanksha Khatri, World Economic Forum, said 75% of businesses think biodiversity risk will affect their stability, stressing that, alongside risk, “we need to talk about opportunities.” Philippe Zauati, MIROVA Bank, underscored that biodiversity-related investment must be scaled up as quickly as possible. Jimena Ojeda Ramirez, Youth Representative, emphasized the interconnectedness of these issues, urging bolder steps.

IUCN Director General Bruno Oberle outlined next steps, including: the conservation and business communities learning each other’s language, and changing financing and investment pathways for nature-based recovery.

Landscapes: Harvey Locke, IUCN, moderated. Nikhil Sekhran, WWF-US, highlighted a fundamental market failure, in which the benefits of nature conservation are long term, but costs are borne immediately by only a few. He said needs must be addressed at the landscape level, particularly the needs of nature custodians.

Bérangère Abba, Secretary of State for Biodiversity, France, outlined France's efforts, including EUR 650 million set aside for artificial soil recycling and the 30-by-30 target.

Baomiavotse Vahinala Raharinirina, Minister of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Madagascar, said Madagascar will triple the number of protected areas and highlighted reforms like establishing a department for green diplomacy. Aidan Davy, International Council on Mining and Metals, said the mining industry should: engage progressive policies that respect legally designated protected areas and establish implementation and progress assessment systems.

Leroy Little Bear, Kainai First Nation, Canada, highlighted the idea of relationship and the need to consider how to relate to everything, including nature. Jochen Renger, GIZ, stressed the landscape approach is apt for a nature-based recovery, and said effective landscape management and restoration is very powerful because it is based on a holistic approach.

Freshwater: James Dalton, IUCN, moderated a panel comprising: Kat Bruce, NatureMetrics; Andre De Freitas, Renova Foundation; Kazuaki Hoshino, Ministry of the Environment, Japan; Adjany Costa, Advisor to the President, Angola; Callist Tindimugaya, Ministry of Water and Environment, Uganda; Richard Sneider, IUCN; Amb. Christian Frutiger, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation; Abdoulaye Sene, 9th World Water Forum, Senegal; Hillary Masundire, University of Botswana; and Flemming Moller Mortensen, Minister for Development and Nordic Cooperation, Denmark.

Discussions focused on: the need for water data and stories to capture the imagination of policymakers and the public, and the importance of educating stakeholders to achieve behavioral change. Panelists also considered: the need to focus on the multiple benefits of wetlands; and adopting an integrated, catchment-based approach to freshwater. They noted that achieving SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation for all), elusive before COVID-19, has been further compromised.

Richard Jenkins, IUCN, summarized, highlighting: a call for the GBF to place freshwater equally with land and oceans; and the need to value, retain, and restore geographical connectivity among freshwater ecosystems.

Ocean: Jessica Nabongo, The Catch Me If You Can, moderated. HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco opened the session, highlighting the essential role the ocean plays in human health and livelihoods and the blue economy's potential to restore ocean health, transition to clean energy, and create jobs.

HE Heremoana Maamaatuaiahutapu, Minister of Culture and the Environment, French Polynesia, told traditional stories on the ocean's interconnectedness to the land. He said society needs to prioritize traditional conservation methods and join the fight against destructive industrial fishing practices.



Bérangère Abba, Secretary of State for Biodiversity, France

Jean-Marie Paugam, Deputy Director General, World Trade Organization (WTO), discussed the WTO's activities to address plastic pollution, and the circular economy.

On collective action, panelists discussed engagement with local coastal communities, waste reduction within the tourism sector, and increased law enforcement. Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary, Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, highlighted youth education and innovation.

The panel on the Marseille Ocean Outcomes and the role of multilateral environmental agreements in restoring ocean health, included: Serge Segura, Oceans Ambassador, France; Joanna Post, UNFCCC; David Cooper, Deputy Director, CBD; Martha Rojas Urrego, Secretary General, Ramsar Convention; and Fred Segor, Principal Secretary, State Department for Wildlife, Kenya. They highlighted the importance of wetlands to ocean health, the interconnectedness of the ocean to climate mitigation and adaptation, and the ocean's link to local livelihoods.

Amb. Peter Thomson, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, closed by reminding everyone that humans belong to the ocean and that society must fight for ocean conservation from a place of intergenerational justice.

Forum Closing

IUCN Deputy Director General SungAh Lee opened the closing session of the Forum. Bérangère Abba, Secretary of State for Biodiversity, France, lauded the Forum for sending a clear message on the need to act urgently. Speakers then provided summaries of the seven Forum themes.

On the Ocean, Minna Epps, IUCN, said the key outcomes included: supporting the call for achieving the 30-by-30 target; and adopting a legally binding instrument on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

On Landscapes, Jonathan Davies, IUCN, presented key messages, reporting discussions on behavior change and consumption habits.

Baomiavotse Vahinala Raharinirina, Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development, Madagascar, said her country is applying landscape approaches to implement green economy.

On Climate Change, Sandeep Sengupta, IUCN, highlighted that the climate and biodiversity crises should be addressed in an integrated manner.

On Economic and Financial Systems, Juha Siikamaki, IUCN, summarized calls to embed biodiversity into economic policymaking, remove harmful subsidies, and shift capital towards nature-positive investments.

On Rights and Governance, Jenny Springer, IUCN, highlighted the Global Indigenous Agenda and summarized priorities: mobilize all tools, including knowledge, environmental law, institutional strengthening, transboundary cooperation, and technical and financial resources.

David Boyd, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, outlined three key actions: recognizing the right to live in a safe, clean, and healthy environment; recognizing and prioritizing legal recognition of Indigenous Peoples' titles and rights; and protecting environmental defenders.

On Freshwater, James Dalton, IUCN, said conservation of freshwater systems should be a development priority. Alex Dehgan, CEO, Conservation X Labs, called for a new generation of conservation entrepreneurs bringing solutions for freshwater and the planet.

On Knowledge, Innovation, and Technology, Binbin Li, Duke Kunshan University, China, noted standard metrics and datasets for biodiversity already exist, but maintaining their coverage and quality requires investment and innovation.

Closing the session, Bruno Oberle highlighted that the Forum will publish a manifesto organized around core messages on climate, biodiversity, and pandemic recovery and the economy. He closed the Forum at 7.09pm.