

## IUCN World Conservation Congress Highlights: Wednesday, 8 September 2021

During the first full day of the Members Assembly, two Sittings took place with Members listening to reports, engaging in strategic discussions, electing officials, and deciding on motions.

This daily report also includes the proceedings of the First Sitting, which took place on Saturday, 4 September, in order to approve the meeting's agenda and allow the contact groups on the motions to start their work.

Highlights of the day included:

- Six approved motions, including renunciation of the doctrine of discovery, lauded by the Chair as “the most important motion ever”;
- Six approved governance motions, including the establishment of an elected Indigenous Councillor position;
- The election of Razan Al Mubarak, United Arab Emirates (UAE), as IUCN President; and
- The awards ceremony, celebrating those who left a lasting legacy to conservation.

### First Sitting

IUCN President Zhang Xinsheng, via video, opened the session, welcoming Members and observers.

IUCN Vice President Ali Kaka said the session's aim is to approve the meeting's agenda, establish the Congress Committees, and allow the contact groups on the motions to start their work.

### Appointment of the Credentials Committee

Kaka introduced the agenda item, including proposed terms of reference (GR-2021-1.1/1-Annex 1-Rev) and membership (GR-2021-1.1/1-Annex 7), which were approved, following a vote. Jenny Gruenberger, Bolivia, Chair of the Credentials Committee, explained voting and speaking rights.

### Adoption of the Agenda

Kaka presented the revised agenda (CGR-2021-1.3/1-Rev). He noted a proposed motion to amend the rules of procedure, which would refer all motions to an online vote within one month following the Congress, to be discussed during the third Sitting of the Assembly. Following a vote, the Assembly approved the agenda.

### Appointment of Congress Committees

Kaka drew attention to the terms of reference for each of the Committees (GR-2021-1.1/1-Annexes 2-6) and presented the proposed membership for the Resolutions, Governance, and Finance and Audit Committees. Following a vote, the Assembly approved the terms of reference and membership of the Committees.

## Presentation by the Resolutions Committee About the Schedule of Contact Groups for All Motions

On behalf of the Council's Motions Working Group, Jon Paul Rodríguez (Venezuela) presented the process on motions. He reminded Members that 19 motions have not been completed through electronic voting and will be discussed in the contact groups together with the governance motions and other urgent motions tabled. He noted that 19 new and urgent motions had been tabled and that the Resolutions Committee will decide on their admissibility. Following a vote, the Assembly approved the procedure and code of conduct for the contact groups as included in document CGR-2021-1.5.

PAKISTAN requested suspending the election of the President in order to conduct the second presidential candidate debate that had been cancelled. He further recalled Resolution 19.6 of 1994, stating that the President should be from a different economic region than that of the Director General.

Nilüfer Oral, Elections Officer, noted that: the second debate was conditioned on all three candidates being physically present in Marseille; and the 1994 motion applies to nominations by the Council, not by Members, adding that nothing in the statutes contains such a restriction. She concluded that there is no irregularity with the nominations. Pakistan requested the motions be discussed in the Resolutions and Steering Committees. Kaka requested Pakistan to submit the motions to the Resolutions Committee, in the right format, which will decide to bring it to the Steering Committee.

## Presentation of the “Marseille Outcomes” Process

Following the positive experience with the Hawai'i Commitments, the Council's Congress Preparatory Committee developed a process named Marseille Manifesto to deliver a strong, focused outcome statement for this Congress.

Jennifer Mohamed-Katerere, IUCN, presented the main components of the outcome statement. She said it will be a communiqué from the Congress, containing strategic key messages that are globally relevant and convey an ambition



IUCN Vice President Ali Kaka

IUCN Director General **Bruno Oberle****Hannah Moosa**, Forum Deputy Manager

for action. Mohamed-Katerere outlined the preparatory and engagement processes, and presented the thematic content of the document, which will be structured around post-COVID-19 nature-based recovery, the post-2020 agenda and the biodiversity crisis, and the climate emergency.

### ***Council Motion Granting Postponement of the Obligation to Pay the 2020 Dues***

Kaka presented the relevant document (GR-2021-1.7/1), noting that its adoption requires a two-thirds majority in each house. Following a vote, the motion was approved.

## **Second Sitting**

IUCN President Zhang Xinsheng lauded the successful start of the first hybrid IUCN Congress. He highlighted the Assembly's role, which includes shaping the post-2020 global agenda for nature conservation. Zhang added that although the COVID-19 pandemic is a crisis, it is also an opportunity to reshape the relationship between humans and nature. Jenny Gruenberger, Bolivia, Chair of the Credentials Committee, explained voting and speaking rights.

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

IUCN Director General Bruno Oberle presented his report structured around: IUCN activities from 2017-2020; key challenges and ways to address them; and future actions.

On past activities, he highlighted overall success in programme delivery, noting that Life on Land and Climate Change were the two strongest pillars, followed by Life Below Water.

On challenges, Oberle distinguished financial, organizational, and political obstacles, noting the Union's growing portfolio of project and activities is accompanied by increased cost and risk, expressing concern about declining financial reserves. He highlighted the need for IUCN to reposition itself in an increasingly complex policy environment.

Overcoming challenges, Oberle underscored, requires: managing risk and increasing efficiency; increasing the Union's membership and the geographical spread of partners; strengthening Member engagement; identifying new business models; and addressing organizational challenges.

On future activities, Oberle emphasized reaching out to a broad group of stakeholders outside the conservation realm. He highlighted strategic initiatives, including the Contributions for Nature platform, a technological tool that allows the transformation of project results into geographical descriptions

of impacts. He added the need to influence the ongoing negotiations on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF), which, he said, currently lacks the necessary ambition. Oberle further discussed nature-based recovery, highlighting nature-based solutions (NbS), and agriculture and land health, noting agriculture is a complex sector, but necessary for the protection of biodiversity. He focused on data and financing for nature initiatives, and highlighted the IUCN Academy, which aims to harness the Union's expertise and build capacities.

Responding to interventions from CAMEROON, ECUADOR, BANGLADESH, and the IUCN Vice-President John Robinson (US), Oberle: noted IUCN is addressing the challenge of underinvestment in agriculture in the Global South and over subsidization in the Global North; said IUCN conducts due diligence before receiving financial support from industry; agreed IUCN needs to leverage knowledge within the Commissions; and said IUCN will prepare more detailed guidelines to implement the various Programme workstreams.

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

**Report on the Results of the IUCN One Nature, One Future Global Youth Summit:** Camila Perez, IUCN Commission on Education and Communication, and Hannah Moosa, Forum Deputy Manager, presented key messages saying the Youth's priority issues include rights of nature, green jobs, nature education, and addressing the digital divide. They summarized the Youth's call to action for: intergenerational understanding that Youth are well informed and able to make genuine contributions; the opportunity to co-design programmatic work; and ensuring fair and equitable inclusion and representation of different stakeholders, including Youth. They expressed optimism that: the IUCN Youth Strategy, to be completed in 2021, will build on the outcome documents from the Global Youth Summit; the IUCN Youth Advisory Committee will support implementation of the new youth strategy; and the new heritage, culture, and youth team will ensure youth engagement moves forward purposefully.

**Report on the Results of the IUCN Summit for Cities, Local Authorities, and Subnational Governments:** Russell Galt, Head of Urban Alliance, presented key messages from four technical roundtables. On financing the green recovery, he said subnational governments need streamlined access to international development finance. On deploying NbS, he highlighted the opportunity to transition from a world of artificial scarcity to one of natural abundance. On realizing





**Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim**, Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee

environmental rights, he stressed the fundamental right to a clean, safe, wildlife-rich, and sustainable environment, including in cities. On advancing ecological urbanism, he highlighted that the survival of the natural world is now contingent on the sustainability of the unnatural world, including cities, and highlighted the role of subnational governments.

**The Influences of Biodiversity Loss and Climate Change on Public Health:** Stewart Magginis, IUCN, opened this strategic discussion, stating biodiversity, climate change, and health are interconnected and urged accelerating implementation of holistic solutions.

Josaia Bainimarama, Prime Minister, Fiji, via video message, said human health is tied to the planet's health, drawing attention to the impact extreme weather events can have on public health systems. He urged supporting NbS to address climate change and biodiversity loss.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization (WHO), stated that as the world recovers and rebuilds from the COVID-19 pandemic, "the scale of our responses must match the scale of the problems we face." He noted the establishment, with IUCN, of an Expert Working Group on Biodiversity, Climate Change, One Health, and NbS.

A panel discussion followed, moderated by Maria Neira, WHO. She said the answer to what can be done to reduce vulnerabilities lies in stopping ecosystem destruction, as ecosystems provide the services that ensure basic human health.

Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee, explained that local knowledge on stars and the environment provide climate predictions, guide nomadic pastoralism, and predict disease outbreaks. William Karesh, EcoHealth Alliance, said scientists and public health workers must work together to identify ways to prevent future pandemics.

Julia Miranda Londoño, IUCN, underscored the importance of protected areas for human health, and highlighted the work of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) COVID-19 Protected Areas Task Force. Hans-Otto Pörtner, Co-Chair, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group II, said climate and biodiversity are intertwined and solutions for one may harm or benefit the other.

Participants noted the need to: adopt One Health policies; ensure protected areas are interconnected, well maintained, and available for humans; and ensure carbon-rich biodiversity to stabilize the climate.

Ibrahim urged moving from talk to action. Karesh called for creative thinking on parks and protected areas, in order to create practical partnerships, including with unlikely partners. Londoño highlighted efforts to promote green businesses to ensure local communities benefit from activities in protected areas.

Pörtner proposed IUCN partner with the IPCC and the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) to define requirements for reaching nature conservation goals.

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), via video message, called for an integrated and biodiversity-inclusive One Health approach that addresses the common drivers of biodiversity loss, climate change, and increased pandemic risk, while supporting better health and wellbeing for all.

### **Report of the IUCN President and Council**

IUCN President Zhang Xinsheng, delivered the report of the President and Council, noting that the previous intersessional period, shaped by the global pandemic, has underlined the importance of a sound relationship between humanity and nature.

He highlighted, *inter alia*: the adoption of the IUCN Global Standard for NbS; the adoption of the IUCN Nature 2030 Programme; a motion requesting the development of a long-term financial strategy; strengthening of performance requirements for Councillors; and the appointment of a new Director-General. He also outlined recommendations for the next Council, including developing a 20-year strategy, vision, and plan for the Union. Zhang further reflected on governance, leadership, and expectations in the context of reviewing past work and examining prospects for the future.

### **Third Sitting**

Antonio Benjamin, Chair, World Commission on Environmental Law, IUCN, opened the session by announcing the new IUCN song, "Prayer for Ganesh and Baobab," performed, via video, by Japanese musician Iruka.

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

Nilüfer Oral, Election Officer, reported on all non-presidential election results, and on the regional representatives to the Council and the Commissions' Chairs.

Members elected included: Angela Andrade, Colombia (Commission on Ecosystem Management); Sean Southey, Canada/South Africa (Commission on Education and Communication); Kristen Walker Painemilla, US (Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy); Jon Paul Rodríguez, Venezuela (Species Survival Commission); Christina Voigt, Germany (World Commission on Environmental Law); and Madhu Rao, India/UK (World Commission on Protected Areas). Nihal Senanayake Welikala, Sri Lanka/UK, was elected as Treasurer.

Deputy Election Officer Rahmat Mohamad announced the election of Razan Al Mubarak, UAE, as President.

### **Motion Calling for an Online Vote on All Motions Following the Congress**

Benjamin introduced Motion M (CGR-2021-3.2/1), submitted on 1 September 2021 by 13 IUCN Members. Motion M proposes amending the Rules of Procedure (RoP) to refer all motions tabled at the Congress and not requiring an immediate decision, to an online vote within one month of the close of the Congress.

Some Members raised concerns, cautioning against delaying voting during the Congress. Others urged for the motion to pass, saying that organizations for which they hold proxies have struggled to participate meaningfully, due to entry restrictions into France and technical difficulties.

Nicholas Robinson, International Council of Environmental Law, on a point of order, said RoP cannot be amended with a motion tabled late, requested General Counsel rule on the motion's consistency with statutes and the RoP, and urged against voting on the motion until such a ruling is made.

Sandrine Friedli Cela, IUCN Legal Advisor, said the unusual circumstances due to the pandemic warrant exceptional consideration, noting this is only feasible with Members' permission, as it implies changes to both the statutes and the RoP.

Benjamin submitted the point of order for voting—whether the motion could proceed to a vote without violating any statutes. Following the vote, Benjamin noted that members had voted to allow voting on Motion M, which required a two-thirds majority. Following the vote, the motion was rejected.

### **Report of the Resolutions Committee and Vote on Motions**

Paul Rodríguez, Chair of the Resolutions Committee, provided a progress report on outstanding motions. He observed that the following six motions are ready for voting. Delegates voted and approved:

- Protection of Andes-Amazon rivers of Peru (the Marañón, Ucayali, Huallaga, and Amazonas) from large-scale infrastructure projects;
- Actions to strengthen food sovereignty and security of Indigenous Peoples and peasant communities;
- Renunciation of the Doctrine of Discovery to rediscover care for Mother Earth;
- Protection of deep-ocean ecosystems and biodiversity through a moratorium on seabed mining;
- Taking action to reduce light pollution; and
- Reinforcing the protection of marine mammals through regional cooperation.

Rodríguez reported that seven more motions are under discussion in contact groups. He added that 18 new and urgent

motions had passed statutory requirements and checks. Eight of those motions were rejected by the Resolutions Committee and were appealed to the Congress Preparatory Committee, which upheld the decision.

Stop Ecocide International, UK, lamented that the motion's appeals process is unclear. The Center for Environmental Ethics and Law, US, said the rejections are not transparent and the rulings are inconsistent. Natural Resources Defense Council, US, requested clarification on the Congress's role in overruling the rejection of motions. The Center for Environmental Legal Studies argued that the suggested amendments to their motion for Establishing a Climate Change Commission, changes the purpose of the motion.

Amran Hamzah, IUCN, provided updates on the work of the IUCN Governance Committee, reporting that the Committee met to consider the 12 governance motions submitted before the meeting, and one new and urgent motion. Noting that all motions have been considered in contact groups, he said six are ready to be considered by the Assembly. Members voted and approved the six motions:

- Establishment of an elected Indigenous Councillor position;
- Modification of the term "Regional Councillor;"
- To protect the intellectual independence of the knowledge-based and evidence-based work carried out by the Commissions and Secretariat of IUCN;
- Role of Commissions in National and Regional Committees;
- Clarification of conditions for readmission of former State Members; and
- Functions of the IUCN Treasurer.

### **Marseille Manifesto**

Jennifer Mohamed-Katerere, IUCN, announced that the Secretariat, with the Friends of the Chair Committee, have prepared another draft of the manifesto, which is available on the Congress website for comments and consideration.

### **IUCN Commissions' Reports, Including Awards**

Kathy MacKinnon, Chair, WCPA, reported on the work of the WCPA, highlighting, *inter alia*: preparation of the Marine Protected Areas Global Standards, to be launched at this Congress; the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas, which was conceived by the Commission, was piloted there, and is now an effective main programme led by the IUCN Secretariat; the other effective area-based conservation measures database at UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Center (WCMC); and the COVID-19 Protected Areas Task Force, which produced a report on the impacts of the pandemic on Protected Area tourism.

The IUCN awards ceremony celebrated those who have contributed to their countries and left a lasting legacy to conservation.

Alfred Oteng-Yeboah, Ghana, was awarded the John C. Philips Memorial Medal, the IUCN's oldest award, for outstanding service to international conservation. Accepting the award, he said, "If we can protect biodiversity, then land degradation and climate change will be a thing of the past." Lisa Dabek, US, was awarded the Harold Jefferson Coolidge Memorial Medal for outstanding contribution to conservation of nature and natural resources.

Assad Serhal, Lebanon, Richard Watling, Fiji, Raoni Metiktire, Brazil, and Jane Goodall, UK, were awarded honorary IUCN memberships for their exceptional contribution to conservation.



Assad Serhal, Lebanon