

Marseille Diaries

Dr. Arvind Kumar, President, India Water Foundation

The IUCN World Conservation Congress, the world's largest and most inclusive environmental decision-making forum concluded in Marseille, France, with an address by the President of France, Emmanuel Macron. The IUCN Congress focused on three main themes: the post-2020 biodiversity conservation framework, to be adopted by the parties to the UN Biodiversity Convention; the role of nature in the global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; the need to transform the global financial system and direct investments into projects that benefit nature and to elect the President, Treasurer, Regional Councillors and Chairs of Commissions, who will make up the IUCN Council. This is the body responsible for the oversight and general control of all the affairs of IUCN. With this year's elected President and the elected IUCN Councillor for South and East Asia being from Asian countries, it is an advent of new possibilities for Asian countries and there are many expectations from the elected officials especially from India.



Advent of the Asian leadership at IUCN



Razan Al Mubarak was elected President of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) by the members of the IUCN. She is the first woman from an Arab country and only the second ever woman to lead the 73-year-old organisation.

Razan Al Mubarak is the managing director of both the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi and the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund. She started her conservation activities in 2001 and She went on to build and run the Mohamed bin Zayed

Species Conservation Fund (MBZ Fund), which has distributed to more than 2,250 conservation projects in over 180 countries since 2008, and served as the youngest Secretary General of the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD), a government agency.

Ms. Mubarak said that she was honoured to be elected President saying, “I am truly honoured to have been elected as the 15th President of the IUCN, especially in this critical moment when we need to elevate nature conservation to the forefront of the global sustainability agenda”.

Vivek Menon Elected IUCN Councillor for South and East Asia

As a cherry on the cake for Asia was the election of Vivek Menon, Executive Director of the Wildlife Trust of India as IUCN councillor for South and East Asia. He is a wildlife conservationist, environmental commentator, author and photographer with a passion for elephants. He has been part of the founding of five environmental & nature conservation organizations in India. The winner of the 2001 Rufford Award for International Conservation, the 2018 Whitley Continuation Award and the 2019 Clark R Bavin award for his work to save the Asian elephant, Menon is the Founder and Executive Director of the Wildlife Trust of India as well as Senior Advisor to the International Fund for Animal Welfare. In India, he plays a role in advising the government on natural heritage conservation as a part of several national committees as well as having been part of the Indian delegations to CITES, UNESCO and CMS.



Twenty-eight Regional Councillors were elected for the Africa, Meso and South America, North America and the Caribbean, South and East Asia, West Asia, Oceania, East Europe, North and Central Asia and West Europe regions. Regional Councillors act as IUCN ambassadors, working to serve the interests and mission of IUCN, and inform the Council on the interests, priorities and needs of IUCN Members in their regions.

Highlights of the Congress

The IUCN World Conservation Congress took place from 3rd September to 11th September, 2021. The IUCN World Conservation Congress is an event that happens once in 4 years. The event, originally scheduled for June 2020, was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was the first hybrid in-person and virtual environmental event since the pandemic began. The Congress brought together leaders from IUCN's 1500+ government, civil society, Indigenous peoples' organizations, business, and academia with over 9000 participants to determine the world's most pressing environmental and development challenges, and actions to address them. IUCN's unique and inclusive membership gives the Congress a powerful mandate as it is not solely government or non-government, but both together.

“The battle for the climate, against climate change, is twinned with the battle to preserve and restore biodiversity,” said French President Emmanuel Macron. The French President spoke at the opening event, and he stressed that, “There is no vaccine for a sick planet”. He stated that the world needs to phase out pesticide use, end plastic pollution and eradicating raw materials linked to deforestation of rainforests from supply chains around the world. He also mentioned that he would push for the Earth’s Polar Regions to be recognised as common global assets and that the world economies should agree to goals and make financial commitments for nature similar to the climate goals.



Hollywood actor and active environmentalist Harrison Ford, who is a passionate campaigner for the protection of the Amazon, highlighted the role of indigenous communities in protecting nature spoke at the opening ceremony on behalf of Conservation International. He paid tribute to the young generation of environmentalists in protecting nature and battling against climate change. He said that they are



sitting in lecture halls, venturing into the field for the first time, writing their thesis, they’re leading marches, organising communities, are learning to turn passionate into progress and potential into power and that in a few years they will be sitting here. He also said that “We are ambitious for perfect solutions, perfect policies, nobody has got that luxury anymore, we got to get to work and got to make things happen, we got to make it happen now!”.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang spoke at the opening ceremony via a video link and urged the major powers of the world to “show responsibility” and play a leading role in improving global environmental governance to create a “clean and beautiful world” highlighting the enormous journey of a herd of Asian elephants in Yunnan as an example of China’s growing success with conservation efforts. He said that countries should use the United Nations to frame global rules and create a governance system that is fair, reasonable and benefit sharing.

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Resolutions and Recommendations Passed

IUCN members are given the opportunity to submit motions on a variety of critical issues for conservation and sustainability. Between 7 May and 28 August 2019, IUCN Members and Council submitted over 200 motions and the submitted motions underwent a technical review to assess their scientific and

technical content which will then be put up for online discussions and finally for electronic voting. The Motions are the mechanism by which IUCN Members can influence third parties and guide the policy and Programme of IUCN. Members vote to approve motions, and once adopted, they become Resolutions and Recommendations, and therefore the body of IUCN's general policy.

For the motions process of the World Conservation Congress 2020, Members were asked to vote on **109 Motions, including 15 with amendments.**



The voting took place on October 2020 with 729 IUCN Members participated in the electronic voting process and **all 109 Motions were adopted** continuing a trend from previous Congresses that the majority of motions that reach the vote are ultimately adopted. Some of the motions adopted are

Strengthened institutional inclusion concerning indigenous peoples, transforming global food systems through sustainable land management that is aligned to the UN SDGs, to name a few.

Under normal circumstances, the motions adopted by electronic vote prior to a Congress would be recorded en bloc during the Members' Assembly, at which point they would enter into force as Resolutions and Recommendations, thereby becoming part of IUCN's general policy. However, due to Covid-19 and the postponement of the Congress, the 109 motions that Members adopted by electronic vote had already entered into force as IUCN policy as of late October, 2020, and have been renumbered and reclassified as Resolutions and Recommendations. Of the 109 approved motions, 96 have been classified as Resolutions, while 13 have been classified as Recommendations.

Launches during the Event

Launch of Declaration by World Water Council

Under the aegis of World Water Council and on the side lines the declaration of **"No water security without ecological security / No ecological security without water security"** of which **India Water Foundation is a proud signatory** along with INBO, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and few more for an enhanced dialogue between the water and conservation communities was launched. It was overwhelming to be part of one of its kind of declarations.

This historic declaration mentions **seven strong commitments** for which each signatory organizations commits to work for "**a better integration of ecosystems and biodiversity in the activities of the water sector**". They will work to develop and promote integrated projects and appropriate public policies at global, national, local and river and lake basin levels. In a second phase, the declaration will be accompanied by concrete actions that will be presented at the **9th World Water Forum inDakar**, Senegal, from 21 to 26 March 2022.

Global Indigenous Agenda

"Our global goals to protect the earth and conserve biodiversity cannot succeed without the leadership, support and partnership of Indigenous Peoples," said Dr Bruno Oberle, IUCN Director General. "The landmark Global Indigenous Agenda presented today breaks ground on Indigenous self-determined nature conservation and natural resource governance. It was made possible by IUCN's unique convening power as a union of Indigenous peoples, governments and civil society."

In 2016, members of the IUCN voted to include Indigenous Peoples' Organisation as a new constituency. The IUCN's Indigenous Peoples Organisation Members spanning six continents developed the *Global Indigenous Agenda for the Governance of Indigenous Lands, Territories, Waters, Coastal Seas and Natural Resources* and launched it at the



IUCN World Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nature which was a first-ever event of its kind set within the context of the IUCN World Conservation Congress.

The Global Indigenous agenda lays out an ambitious vision for indigenous led conservation and calls for recognition of policies and laws to respect and secure the right of Indigenous Peoples over their lands, territories and resources. The solutions to biodiversity loss and climate change mitigation efforts should include traditional indigenous knowledge and practices.

The *Global Indigenous Agenda* lays out 10 high-level proposals and outcomes relating to five themes: Indigenous governance; biodiversity conservation; climate action; post-COVID 19 recovery efforts and food security; and global policy setting.

Sustainable Tourism Initiative

"Protected areas play a crucial role in maintaining the health of the planet and our health as a species, and are critically important in conserving biodiversity, ecosystem services and mitigating impacts of natural disasters and climate change. Through this project, IUCN provides a lifeline to local communities who are unable to finance their vital nature conservation operations after decades of reliance on

ecotourism ventures to supplement meagre budgets," says **James Hardcastle, Associate Director, Global Protected Areas Programme, IUCN.**

The IUCN and the German development agency GIZ announced a new programme to strengthen the resilience of community-based tourism in and around protected and conserved areas worldwide. The programme, which is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), will invest up to 17 million Euros to boost the recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 on people and nature. The initiative will use tourism as an instrument to contribute to sustainable development in developing and emerging countries.

IUCN will initially work with two World Heritage sites and five other protected areas in Peru and Vietnam to increase the resilience of the community-based tourism sector to future disruptions. The activities will include engaging local communities and indigenous people in developing community-based ecotourism action plans, and revising site management plans to include detailed tourism destination and visitor management protocols and guidance.

Local people who are dependent on nature tourism will be able to earn an additional income for example, by restoring trails or other infrastructure or by collecting marine plastic, from the dedicated 'cash for work' scheme under the initiative. IUCN will also provide training for protected area managers and local entrepreneurs on tourism recovery measures, One Health principles, safeguards and strategies post-COVID-19, itinerary and product development and promotion for small-scale visitor management.

Experiences gathered in the pilot sites will help to form better decision and inform further action for community-based tourism solutions and the role of community-based tourism in pandemic recovery and prevention in and around protected areas on a global scale.

Collaborative Certification Scheme for Nature-Based Solutions and Great Blue Wall Initiative

IUCN unveiled a plan to develop a collaborative certification system to ensure sustainable benefits from Nature-based Solutions for Societal Challenges (NbS). The certification-based system will be launched in 2022. Businesses that developed their Nature-based Solutions interventions in accordance with the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions and are interested in obtaining certification will be able to apply for certification through one of several existing sustainability certification schemes recognised by IUCN. Upon obtaining certification, they will then be able to use IUCN's NbS logo in addition to the relevant third-party certification scheme's logo.

The initiative aims to promote the adoption of Nature-based solutions as a proven sustainable development approach across sectors, and to encourage their delivery at the scale and quality necessary to meet global climate, conservation and development targets by 2030. The Facility will help catalyse financing and investment for NbS, assist implementers in identifying and making use of policy levers at global, regional, national and sub-national levels as well as facilitate knowledge across the globe

Under the leadership of Western Indian Ocean states, IUCN and partners committed to support the Great Blue Wall Initiative, the first regionally connected network to develop a regenerative blue economy to the benefit of 70 million people, while conserving and restoring marine and coastal biodiversity

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

*Today's IUCN Red List update is a powerful sign that, despite increasing pressures on our oceans, species can recover if states truly commit to sustainable practices," said **Dr Bruno Oberle, IUCN Director General**. "States and others now gathered at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Marseille must seize the opportunity to boost ambition on biodiversity conservation, and work towards binding targets based on sound scientific data. These Red List assessments demonstrate just how closely our lives and livelihoods are intertwined with biodiversity."*

The IUCN released the updated Red List of Threatened Species which shows that some 902 species are officially extinct and that 30 per cent of the species that it assessed face the threat of extinction. The updated list shows that four of the seven most commercially fished tuna species have shown signs of recovery, the IUCN said in a press statement.

The bold step taken by French government to invite participants from all over the world especially in times of Corona deserves applaud. The event is jointly organized by the French Ministry for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition and the International Union for Conservation of Nature. With nearly 6,000 registered participants on site and more than 3,500 online participants, this hybrid event brought together leaders from government, civil society, indigenous, faith and spiritual communities, the private sector, and academia, to collectively decide on actions to address the most pressing conservation and sustainable development challenges. To conclude we can say it is an all inclusive roadmap for sustainable conservation recovery.