

IUCN World Conservation Congress

September 2012, Jeju, Republic of Korea

Theme Framework

The first decade of the 21st century has seen tremendous increases in our understanding of the natural world around us. We know ever more about how we connect with and depend on nature. However we also know more about how we are increasingly undermining nature, the vital infrastructure that supports all human life and prosperity, and weakening its ability to react to change. Yet despite the growing awareness of our planet's, and our own, vulnerability, we are still unable to take many of the collective decisions needed to stop this.

The apparent slowness of global decision making on environmental issues belies what is happening on the ground. Conservation does work. Many local results show that investing in nature and restoring natural areas brings social and economic return. Even if every success is not replicable across ecosystems, cultures or political systems, they point the way to making nature more resilient globally.

Following the 2008 World Conservation Congress with its theme [A diverse and sustainable world](#), our more than 1,100 Members and 11,000 Commission members are already looking forward to 2012. The next IUCN World Conservation Congress will bring together people from all over the world and from all sectors to discuss, debate and decide on how we can build resilience and strengthen nature, and thus our own prosperity, by scaling-up local conservation successes and putting in action-based commitments, plans and solutions.

Global inertia

With newspaper headlines focused on the global economic crisis, the climate change negotiations in 2009 concluded without any concrete agreement, and 2010 does not seem to be moving any faster. The pace and scale of natural disasters is affecting more and more people and environments, and many scientists believe that the linear increase in events we were taking as a reference up to now could, in fact, be shifting to an exponential model at such a rate that there will be no turning back.

The third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook report indicates that the 2010 target of reducing the rate of biodiversity loss won't be met. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and the Red List Index reinforce this message and tell us that the challenges are particularly acute in the oceans and coasts.

Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals is falling behind, and we focus on exploiting ever more challenging sources of fossil fuels, such as oil sands, rather than work towards viable alternatives for decarbonising our energy mix. The G7 has become the G20, but the gap between the very rich and the very poor is widening. Despite the extremely high value of ecosystem services from nature, they are vastly undervalued by our governance systems and economic models.

As we move towards 2012 and the next IUCN Congress, our rapidly changing world is presenting us with increasing challenges for biodiversity along with new, and urgent opportunities to conserve it.

Resilient nature

Nature provides humans, and our societies and economies, with a vast range of benefits, both material (food, fibres, clean water, etc.) and spiritual (recreation, cultural values, etc.).

An uncertain future awaits and the strength, flexibility and capacity to adapt to change for both nature and humans will be vital. We urgently need to build this resilience into our systems to successfully manage the impacts of predicted as well as unforeseen changes.

The means to achieve resilience are already at our disposal. We have the science and knowledge to identify the challenges and lay out options to deal with them. And in an increasingly connected world, we can share and learn across countries, cultures and climates.

It is already happening on the ground. Thousands of organizations and millions of people around the world *are* taking action on the ground to successfully conserve biodiversity and boost nature's resilience. IUCN's role, today more than ever before, is to make sure this work is recognised, replicated, scaled to higher levels, and used to influence policy decisions.

Union power

IUCN believes that achieving biodiversity conservation, and therefore human prosperity, is only possible through addressing four pressing issues: mitigating and adapting to climate change, managing ecosystems for human well-being, securing a sustainable energy future and transforming to sustainable green economies. Through the implementation of the IUCN Programme, we know that our challenges may be global but the solutions must include both local and global dimensions.

The second decade of the 21st century finds us at many important crossroads. Within the next few years the world will hopefully adopt a new set of targets aimed at reducing the loss of biodiversity; the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio + 20) will bring nations together in Rio to discuss a sustainable development agenda that closely mirrors the concerns of IUCN as expressed in our Programme; in 2015, the United Nations General Assembly will review progress on the Millennium Development Goals, for which IUCN provides the Red List Index as a key indicator, and agree on next steps.

The time to fully leverage IUCN's value proposition has come: we need to promote our scientific authority, both for biodiversity knowledge and conservation standards; we need to be the catalysts of new and equal partnerships throughout and beyond the Union, that will secure a sustainable future for all; we need to leverage the power of the Union by ensuring that the IUCN Congress is linked with and influences the many other local, regional and global processes in place and empowers people to take action.

Blueprint for action

Effective conservation action cannot be achieved by conservationists alone. The 2012 IUCN World Conservation Congress is the place to put aside differences and work together to provide the means and mechanisms for good environmental governance, engaging all parts of society to share both responsibilities and the benefits of conservation.

The IUCN Congress will set out a blueprint for action to increase resilience in a changing and uncertain world. It will build on the success of previous Congresses and concrete conservation results from all over the world, as well as bring together people and plans inside and outside IUCN to create a road-map for the future. In Jeju, a stronger link between the Forum and the Members' Assembly will ensure that the Congress fulfils its many roles as a venue for dialogue, a place for debate, a forum for knowledge sharing, and a space to catalyse change.

Human survival and prosperity depends on a strong and resilient natural infrastructure, one that responds and adapts effectively to change. With collective global decision-making slowing, and challenge and change coming ever faster, building natural resilience is more important than ever. Local conservation results show how this can be done, and why it needs to happen at a global scale. The IUCN Congress is where the world comes together to make the commitments, plans and actions to build resilience, make nature stronger and drive real and lasting change on a global scale.