



IUCN World Conservation Congress Relevance for Europe



IUCN World Conservation Congress: relevance for Europe

Summary

The IUCN World Conservation Congress has produced a number of outcomes that can be helpful in the European context. Firstly, during the Members Assembly, the new IUCN Council was elected. With 30 members, the Council represents the principal governing body of IUCN, including a number of European Members: Ms. Sonia Castañeda Rial (Spain), Ms. Hilde Eggermont (Belgium), Ms. Maud Lelievre (France), Mr Vilmos Kizsel (Hungary) and Mr Samad-John Smaranda (Romania). The Congress outcomes most relevant for Europe are summarised below, organised by thematic area:

- **On agriculture:** IUCN Members adopted two key resolutions, namely *Transforming global food systems through sustainable land management that is aligned to the UN SDGs* ([WCC-2020-Res-003](#)), acknowledging the need for more multi-stakeholder dialogue and calling for the promotion of land health and soil biodiversity in relevant policy fora, and *Developing agroecological practices as nature-based solutions* ([WCC-2020-Res-007](#)), requesting that the IUCN Secretariat prepare a report on agroecological practices as Nature-based Solutions (NbS). **Regarding soil**, two newly adopted resolutions are very relevant: *Combatting soil degradation and artificialisation* ([WCC-2020-Res-070](#)), which asks institutions at different levels to establish land use plans to curb the artificialisation of soils and improve their health, and *Generalising alternative practices and techniques to the use of synthetic pesticides* ([WCC-2020-Res-066](#)). These resolutions can be helpful tools for the achievement of the EU Biodiversity and Farm to Fork Strategy targets to reduce by 50% the overall use of and risk from chemical pesticides by 2030, but also in the context of the new [EU Mission of A new Soil Deal for Europe](#).
- **On biodiversity conservation and invasive alien species (IAS):** The resolution on *Ensuring adequate funding for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* ([WCC-2020-Res-131](#)) is of fundamental importance – no IUCN Member state voted against it. The resolution encourages donors to ensure stability and viability of the IUCN Red List Unit, in order to successfully achieve the new Red List Strategic Plan (RLSP), which aims to add 129,000 assessments and 137,000 reassessments by 2030. This is in line with the foreseen IUCN Europe reassessment of the IUCN European Red List of Bees in 2022. A resolution on eradicating IAS to conserve island biodiversity and benefit society ([WCC-2020-Res-096](#)) was also adopted. This is aligned with the EU Biodiversity Strategy's 2030 goal of decreasing by 50% the number of Red List species threatened by IAS. Finally, the resolution on *Urgent action against the grass *Cortaderia selloana* outside of its natural distribution range* ([WCC-2020-Res-004](#)) calls on governments in the European Union (EU) to propose the inclusion of this species in the List of Invasive Alien Species of Union Concern.
- **On protected areas:** [Resolution 125](#) on *Setting area-based conservation targets based on evidence of what nature and people need to thrive* calls on all IUCN constituents to support the target of effectively and equitably protecting and conserving at least 30% of the planet by 2030, with a focus on sites of particular importance for biodiversity, in well-connected systems of protected areas and OECMs in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. IUCN Europe at the IUCN Congress presented the outcomes and next steps of the [ENVISION project](#), a helpful approach in the context of the achievement of the 30x30 target, in the EU but also globally. In addition, Members at Congress also approved [Resolution 74](#) *recognising the importance of geoheritage and geodiversity in protected areas*. In line with this resolution, IUCN Members also adopted [WCC-2020-Res-088](#) on the [conservation of the natural diversity and natural heritage in mining environments](#).
- **On Nature-based Solutions (NbS):** IUCN Members and Secretariat both called for the promotion of the IUCN Global NbS Standard ([WCC-2020-Res-060](#)), which was also mentioned in the new [Climate Adaptation Strategy of the EU Commission](#). IUCN advanced the discussion on NbS by unveiling a [plan to develop a collaborative certification system](#) in order to ensure that the changes resulting from Nature-based Solutions for Societal Challenges are truly sustainable. This



development will also be crucial in achieving the objectives of the resolution on *Integrated solutions to the climate change and biodiversity crises* ([WCC-2020-Res-114](#)), adopted in Marseille. IUCN launched the [first Assessment of IUCN NbS Global Standard in Mediterranean urban areas](#): an evidence-based report on the benefits of NbS to cities in the Mediterranean region, in line with the Resolution [WCC-2020-Res-031 - The implementation of nature-based solutions in the Mediterranean Basin](#). With regards to EU policy, these developments will be essential in achieving the climate-related targets set out in the European Green Deal, in particular those set out in the EU Climate Law and the Fit for 55 Package.

- **On ecosystem restoration:** IUCN Members showed great support for ecosystem restoration by adopting key resolutions such as [WCC-2020-Res-035](#) on *Promoting IUCN leadership in the implementation of the UN Decade on Restoration 2021–2030*. The resolution gives the mandate to IUCN to seize the opportunity given by the United Nations resolution and to place ecosystem restoration at the apex of the international environmental debate. Other ecosystem-specific resolutions were also adopted in Marseille, such as [WCC-2020-Res-009](#) - *Protecting and restoring endangered grassland and savannah ecosystems* and [WCC-2020-Res-017](#) - *Protection of natural flows of water for the conservation of wetlands*, which could position IUCN as a key ally for the EU in achieving the [EU Nature Restoration Plan](#), several European Green Deal targets, the objectives set out in the EU environmental acquis, and the commitments under existing international conventions, e.g. Ramsar Convention.
- **On forests:** Members voted [almost unanimously](#) for [WCC-2020-Res-127](#) on *Strengthening the protection of primary and old-growth forests in Europe and facilitating their restoration where possible*. The resolution encourages IUCN State Members in Europe to: “promote a legal framework in favour of the conservation and restoration of primary and old-growth forests, with actions to set the strict protection of primary and old-growth forests as a goal for the European Green Deal, and promote its implementation through the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the EU Forest Strategy, the Natura 2000 network, the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, national forest strategies, and regional initiatives”. To do so, the resolution calls, inter alia, for a ban on timber sourcing from primary and old-growth forests. The resolution will also be fundamental in supporting another crucial component of the European Green Deal, the [EU Forest Strategy](#). Linked with the above resolutions, another key area of IUCN Europe’s work was reinforced by the Members’ decisions at Congress, namely supporting halting illegal deforestation globally. Resolution [WCC-2020-Rec-011](#) on *The fight against imported deforestation* and [Resolution WCC-2020-Res-108](#) on *Deforestation and agricultural commodity supply chains* will be key in guiding IUCN’s efforts. IUCN Europe will continue its involvement in and provision of input to this debate through the European Commission’s multi-stakeholder platform to tackle global deforestation and forest degradation, as well as in the context of the process to develop the upcoming EU legislation on imported deforestation.
- **On biodiversity and the economy:** Some Resolutions from the IUCN Congress can help the EU debate in this area, including [WCC-2020-Res-056](#) on *Biodiversity financing*, which recommends to states to integrate biodiversity goals and considerations into the national development plans and policies of key economic sectors, and [WCC-2020-Res-057](#) on *Accounting for biodiversity: encompassing ecosystems, species and genetic diversity*. Regarding the latter, IUCN Members also demonstrated their support for the UN and the EU in adopting a new statistical framework to better account for biodiversity and ecosystems in national economic planning and policy decision-making. This is in line with the announced revision of the Regulation on European Environmental Economic Accounts (EEEA), and will expand its coverage to include a new module on natural capital accounting, fully consistent with the UN framework.
- **On oceans:** The Congress further underscored the importance of healthy and resilient oceans by adopting a wide range of resolutions, such as [WCC-2020-Res-113](#) on *Restoring a peaceful and quiet ocean*, addressing noise pollution in the ocean, useful for the EU in the context of the planned review of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive by 2023 mentioned in the [EU Zero Pollution Action Plan](#). Another resolution was [WCC-2020-Res-025](#) *Ecosystem conservation*,



restoration and remediation in the ocean, which advocates for an enhanced focus on marine ecosystem restoration, in line with the European Green Deal goals and in the upcoming EU legally binding restoration targets. Furthermore, Members approved two resolutions on seabed mining, *Protection of deep-ocean ecosystems and biodiversity through a moratorium on seabed mining* ([WCC-2020-Res-122](#)) and the *Call to withdraw draft-permit mining of fossil fuels underneath UNESCO World Heritage Site Wadden Sea* ([WCC-2020-Rec-133](#)). These resolutions help complement the current EU discussion on protecting marine biodiversity and align with the EU Biodiversity Strategy's call for the application of the precautionary principle with regards to international negotiations on the exploitation of marine minerals in the international seabed area. Key resolutions in the marine context also include [WCC-2020-Res-019](#) on stopping the global plastic pollution crisis in marine environments by 2030, for which all IUCN Members voted in favour, and [WCC-2020-Res-069](#) on eliminating plastic pollution in protected areas, with priority action on single-use plastic products. These resolutions will support the achievement of key EU policies such as the Zero Pollution Action Plan, the new Circular Economy Action Plan and the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030.

- **On urban biodiversity:** On the opening day of the IUCN Congress, the inaugural IUCN Local Action Summit took place. A dozen subnational government leaders took part, announcing an array of ambitious action pledges. Discussions continued at the Urban Planet Pavilion where some 10 events were organised covering topics ranging from environmental human rights to Nature-based Solutions. IUCN Members adopted two urban Resolutions: [WCC 2020 Res 067](#) calling for a strengthening of the IUCN Urban Alliance, and [WCC 2020 Dec 138](#) on including subnational governments in IUCN's membership. Additionally, the IUCN Urban Nature Index—a new knowledge product for measuring the ecological performance of cities—was unveiled. The main outcome document of the IUCN Congress, the Marseille Manifesto, includes an important urban commitment “to expand universal access to high-quality green spaces and to enhance urban biodiversity in 100 cities, representing around 100 million citizens by 2025...”.
- **On BEST:** The “BEST and beyond” pavilion hosted 31 speakers, both online and in-person, with a large array of expertise in the implementation of BEST projects in the EU's overseas – Outermost Regions (ORs), with financial support from the European Commission (DG ENV), the French Biodiversity Office (*Office Français de la Biodiversité – OFB*) and the French Development Agency (*Agence Française de Développement – AFD*) & Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs), with the financial support of the European Commission (DG INTPA). The sessions, spread over four days, provided visitors with a great opportunity to learn more about the projects and local/regional initiatives, as well as about the challenges and actions undertaken by local organisations, and individual stories. Among the speakers, the team noted the presence of national ministers for the environment and representatives of intergovernmental organisations. The schedule also featured a special high-level joint BIOPAMA & BEST social event. Some of the sessions can be accessed here: [LIFE4BEST \(ORs\)](#) and [BEST 2.0+ \(OCTs\)](#). Moreover, all 153 projects funded to date under this initiative are presented in the BEST brochure, available [here](#).



1. About the IUCN Congress

The **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress (WCC) was held from the 3rd to the 11th September 2021 in Marseille, France**. After a year of postponement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, IUCN constituents came together to democratically decide the way forward for the Union, electing its new President and Council, new governance for its experts' Commissions, approving resolutions and recommendations¹, and giving the green light to the new IUCN Programme for the upcoming years. Despite the circumstances, the 26th World Conservation Congress was a great success. According to the latest data, the event hosted more than 9,000 registered participants both on site and online, while over 25,000 members of the general public were able to visit the exhibition.

The Congress, as usual, was divided in two segments, the Forum and the Members Assembly:

The Forum was open to all participants, and constituted an exceptional opportunity to learn about successes, discoveries and projects that IUCN Secretariat and Members carried out throughout the world in the last four years. It was an occasion to engage directly with world experts on biodiversity conservation and to catch a glimpse of the work of the entire organisation. The Forum was preceded by four summits that showed the multi-stakeholder nature of IUCN membership, namely:

- the Global Youth Summit,
- the IUCN CEO Summit,
- the World Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nature, and
- the IUCN Local Action Summit.

The Members Assembly started right after the Forum. It was reserved to IUCN constituents and represented the core of the event. Members adopted 148 resolutions and recommendations, of which 39 were agreed in Marseille and 109 through online voting prior to the event. At the gathering, a new president was voted in, Ms. [Razan al Mubarak](#) from the United Arab Emirates, who will help to guide the Union for the next four years.

During the assembly, the new IUCN Council was elected. With 30 members, the Council represents the principal governing body of IUCN, including a number of European members:

- Ms. Sonia Castañeda Rial (Spain),
- Ms. Hilde Eggermont (Belgium),
- Ms. Maud Lelievre (France),
- Mr Vilmos Kizsel (Hungary) and
- Mr Samad-John Smaranda (Romania).

At its conclusion, the event was awarded the ISO 20121 Event Sustainability Management System certification, as a recognition of its efforts to minimise the environmental impacts of the event, as well as the Large Event Gender Equity label by the French reference certification organisation AFNOR.

¹ To see the full list of motions click [here](#), while for the vote results of the motions adopted at the IUCN Congress click [here](#)



2. Launch of the IUCN Europe’s Work Plan 2021-2024

IUCN has now agreed on the new [IUCN Nature 2030](#) programme, after many years of deliberation across the Union. The new [IUCN European Regional Office Work Plan 2021-2024](#), presented during the World Conservation Congress, is the regional means for the implementation of the IUCN 2030 Programme.

The European Work Plan is the result of extensive consultations with IUCN Members, Commissions and Secretariat: its implementation will need a collective approach of the IUCN family: of the Secretariat, Members, Commissions and of course of key external partners. The Work Plan was warmly welcomed by those present in Marseille and during the 2-hour presentation event Members expressed their approval and discussed some ideas for its joint implementation.

The European Work Plan highlights the thematic areas in which IUCN will be focusing in Europe over the next four years. The five *Prioritised Programme Areas* in the global programme are the basis for the five overarching goals of the IUCN European Work Plan: *sustainable land use, tackling climate change, integrating nature in cities, healthy oceans, and reshaping our economy*.

The following sections of this briefing will analyse each of the 5 overarching goals abovementioned together with the outcomes of the World Conservation Congress. The latter include the engagement of the IUCN Europe’s office, the resolutions approved by our Members, and the Marseille Manifesto.

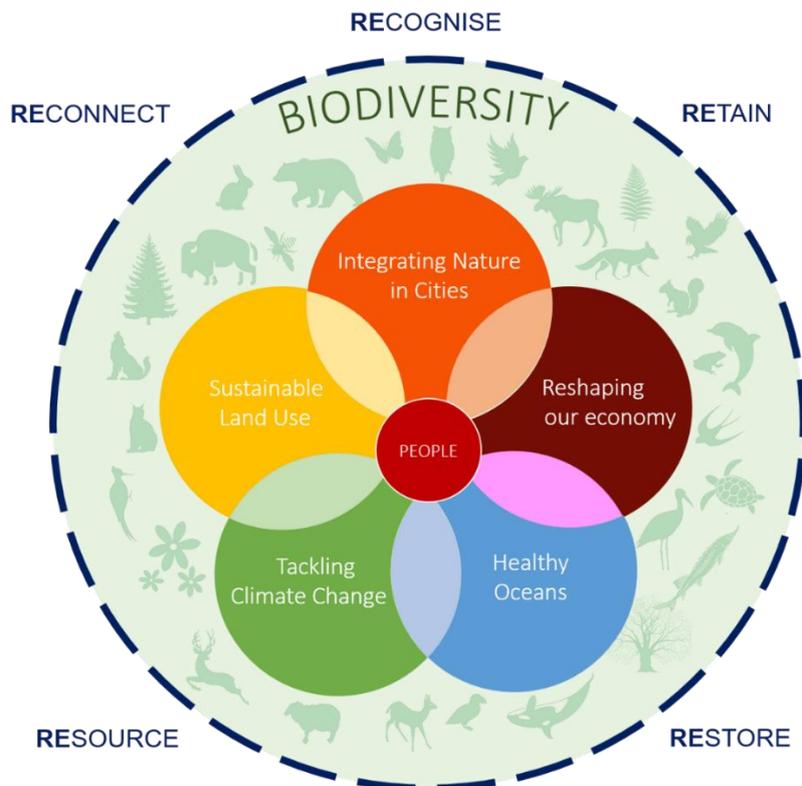


Fig.1 Thematic areas graph from the IUCN European Regional Office Work Plan 2021-2024



2.1 Sustainable Land Use

The goal of sustainable land use within the IUCN European Work Plan is very detailed and covers a wide array of crucial topics, ranging from the IUCN Red Lists of Species and Ecosystems to IUCN's work on sustainable agriculture. The IUCN European region's efforts will be aligned with both the relevant European policies, such as the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and the EU Farm to Fork Strategy, and the main outcomes from the IUCN Congress in Marseille.

Sustainable agriculture

The area of work area on achieving a more sustainable agricultural and food system (chapter 5.2.3) represents a key priority for the new IUCN European Work Plan. The regional work on sustainable agriculture will greatly contribute to the [IUCN Strategic Initiative on Sustainable Agriculture and Land Health](#).

This area of work includes several objectives such as promoting the uptake of Nature-based Solutions in agriculture and establishing constructive dialogues with different stakeholders to support the transition to sustainable agriculture. These goals are strongly aligned with two resolutions adopted at Congress by IUCN Members, namely [Transforming global food systems through sustainable land management that is aligned to the UN SDGs \(WCC-2020-Res-003\)](#), which acknowledges the need for more multi-stakeholder dialogue and calls for the promotion of land health and soil biodiversity in relevant policy fora, and [Developing agroecological practices as nature-based solutions \(WCC-2020-Res-007\)](#), requesting the Secretariat to prepare a report on agroecological practices as nature-based solutions (NbS).

In fact, **IUCN Europe is starting to develop a report relating nature-based solutions with sustainable agriculture, to be launched in 2023**. A second report on the use of metrics for sustainable agriculture will also be developed. Moreover, following the experience of the [Round tables on the Green Architecture of the Common Agricultural Policy](#) organised together with the European Commission, **talks are already ongoing with the EU institutions to continue pursuing the dialogue among stakeholders** on how to collectively improve the sustainability of the European food system.

During the IUCN Congress, IUCN Europe hosted two events on sustainable agriculture: [Agriculture & Nature dialogue](#) and [The transition to sustainable agriculture: for people, food and nature](#). These events were organised in the context of the support to our work on sustainable agriculture from the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. A key outcome was **the stakeholders call for continuing the dialogue joining the agriculture and environmental actors**, and the general agreement that events such as the Roundtables organised jointly with the European Commission are excellent platforms upon which to build on. Representatives from farmers (European council of young farmers, CEJA) and environmental (World Wildlife Fund, WWF) organisations also presented some suggestions on how to enhance the power of these dialogues in future, emphasising the importance to focusing on their potential influence the policymaking processes.

Regarding the soil, there are two newly adopted resolutions that are very relevant, in particular: on [combatting soil degradation and artificialisation \(WCC-2020-Res-070\)](#), which, inter alia, asks institutions at different levels to establish land use plans to curb the artificialisation of soils and improve their health, and [generalising alternative practices and techniques to the use of synthetic pesticides \(WCC-2020-Res-066\)](#), which encourages farmers to adopt sustainable practices and use alternatives to synthetic pesticides on their land in



order to accelerate the ecological transition in agriculture . These democratically adopted resolutions can be helpful tools for the achievement of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 target to reduce by 50% the overall use of and risk from chemical pesticides by 2030, but also in the context of the new [EU Mission of A new Soil Deal for Europe](#). IUCN Europe will also work on this critical issue through a specific **Horizon Europe project, [SOILGUARD](#), as well as by following the developments around the EU Soil Initiative.**

Biodiversity conservation

Future efforts of IUCN will be also focused on continuing the work on the Red List of Species and of Ecosystems. It is thus of fundamental importance the World Conservation Congress' resolution on [Ensuring adequate funding for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species](#), asking donors to respond generously to the fundraising initiative for the Red List, for which no IUCN Member State voted against. The resolution encourages donors to ensuring stability and viability to the IUCN Red List Unit, so to successfully achieve the **new Red List Strategic Plan (RLSP), which aims to add 129,000 assessments and 137,000 reassessments by 2030**. The overwhelming support for this resolution is key for IUCN Europe to consolidate knowledge via our Red List work, continuing our partnership with the EU Commission on this topic.

With regards to the protection of pollinators, IUCN in Europe is currently contributing to Priority 1 of the EU Pollinator's initiative: *improving knowledge of pollinator decline, its causes and consequences*. In addition, with the new work on developing action plans, IUCN will be contributing to priorities 2 and 3 of the abovementioned initiative, namely tackling the causes of pollinator decline and raising awareness, engaging society-at-large and promoting collaboration. In Marseille, **IUCN Europe presented the technical guidance documents prepared for the European Commission**. These guidance provide expert advice to multiple target audiences including businesses, farmers, citizens, IAS managers and local authorities. **The new Horizon Europe project SAFEGUARD will also contribute to this stream of work and, also helping to connect the two work areas of biodiversity and agriculture.**

Moreover, during the upcoming two years IUCN Europe will reassess the IUCN European Red List of Bees, Mammals, Vascular Plants and other eight taxonomic groups (in the context of the EC funded PULSE project); and very soon the European Red Lists of Hoverflies will be published, while the European Red List of Moths will be released in 2024. In addition three Species Action Plans for the conservation of most threatened pollinators in the EU are under preparation: IUCN is working with key experts on preparing these documents. This work taps into an important IUCN knowledge product: the [Guidelines for Species Conservation Planning \(IUCN SSC 2017\)](#), developed by IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG).

IUCN Europe will continue to provide scientific knowledge contributing to the implementation of the EU Regulation on IAS and IAS management practices in Europe through the development and communication of technical guidance, analysis and good practices, and capacity building in IAS management. During the Assembly, IUCN constituents also adopted a resolution on [maximising return on conservation investments and sustainable development: eradicating invasive alien species \(IAS\) to conserve island biodiversity and benefit society \(WCC-2020-Res-096\)](#), asking Members, governments and relevant Rio Conventions to promote policies that promote the increased scale, scope and pace of IAS eradications from islands worldwide, which can be aligned with the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 goal of decreasing the number of Red List species they threaten by 50%. In this context, it is also worth highlighting the resolution on [urgent action against the grass *Cortaderia selloana*](#)



[outside of its natural distribution range \(WCC-2020-Res-004\)](#) which calls on governments in the European Union to propose the inclusion of this species in the List of Invasive Alien Species of Union Concern.

Protected areas

IUCN over the decades developed a series of tools and standards to support a more effective and equitable management of protected areas. These include the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas, the IUCN Protected Areas management categories, and the IUCN Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) guidelines. The use of such tools holds a prominent spot in the IUCN European Work Plan under the chapter “Promote the uptake of IUCN tools in the designation, classification and management of Protected Areas”.

The draft global target of protecting 30% of the Earth’s land and sea is also gaining enormous traction in the international policy arena with over 100 states supporting the so-called 30x30 target either through unilateral pledges, such as the United States of America, or through existing coalitions of the willing, such as the [High Level Ambition Coalition for Nature and People](#) and the global coalition [#UnitedforBiodiversity](#). The 30% target is also particularly important in Europe, as it was included in the recent EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 and supported by Member States in the [Council of the European Union conclusions](#) of October 2020, and in the [European Parliament Resolution of 9 June 2021](#). A distinctive **feature of the EU is the 10% target of strict protection**, embedded in the 30% overall goal. **IUCN Europe believes that this ambitious yet needed goal could be achieved, considering as a base the IUCN PA management categories**, and with the collaboration of key stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities.

At Congress in Marseille, IUCN Europe presented the outcomes and next steps of the [ENVISION project](#). A research initiative that strives to develop an inclusive approach to the management of protected areas, known as ‘**inclusive conservation**’, with the aim of improving biodiversity and human well-being. This can be **a helpful approach in the context of the achievement of the 30x30 target, in the EU but also globally**. IUCN Europe has been deeply involved in the discussion surrounding protected areas in Europe, organising and participating in stakeholders’ discussions and consultations on the implementation of related EU biodiversity policies, including in the process of elaboration of the technical note on criteria and guidance for protected areas designation.

During the World Conservation Members Assembly gave a strong mandate to IUCN to continue improving the designation, support effective management and promote a fair and inclusive decision-making process in protected areas. Amongst the different resolutions, it is of particular importance [WCC-2020-Res-125](#) on [setting area-based conservation targets based on evidence of what nature and people need to thrive](#). The resolution calls on all IUCN constituents to support by 2030 a target of effectively and equitably protecting and conserving at least 30% of the planet, with a focus on sites of particular importance for biodiversity, in well-connected systems of protected areas and OECMs in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. By adopting this resolution, IUCN Members aligned the work of the union to the commitments and leadership of the EU at regional and global stage. In this context, **tools such as the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas can be very helpful**, as highlighted by the European Parliament in its [Resolution from June 2021](#).

In addition, Members at Congress also approved [Resolution 74](#) *recognising the importance of geoheritage and geodiversity in protected areas*, supporting, among other things, the



importance of a future IUCN initiative on Key Geoheritage Areas, as a complement to the existing Key Biodiversity Areas programme. The conservation of the geoheritage is already considered a priority for many EU countries. Member organisations are now asked to establish or improve national legislation concerning the protection of geoheritage. In line with this resolution, IUCN Members also adopted [WCC-2020-Res-088](#) on the [conservation of the natural diversity and natural heritage in mining environments](#).

2.2. Tackling Climate Change

Nature-based Solutions

Tackling climate change is a transversal topic in all IUCN's work. In this context, mitigating and adapting to the effects that the relentless warming of our planet constituted one of the seven themes at the World Conservation Congress 2021. Nature-based solutions (NbS), as defined by [Resolution 069 at the Hawaii World Conservation Congress](#) in 2016, are a major part of solving the climate crisis and tools such as the IUCN Global Standard on Nature-based solutions will be fundamental in ensuring their correct implementation.

In Marseille, IUCN Members and Secretariat both called for the **promotion of the [IUCN Global NbS standard \(WCC-2020-Res-060\)](#), which was also mentioned in the new [Climate Adaptation Strategy of the European Commission](#)**. The need to implement NbS in accordance with the criteria defined by the IUCN NbS Global Standard was also stressed during the session on the Global Youth Statement on NbS, as a means to address issues of misuse and misinterpretation of the term. IUCN advanced the discussion on NbS by unveiling a [plan to develop a collaborative certification system](#) in order to ensure that the changes resulting from Nature-based Solutions for Societal Challenges are truly sustainable. The NbS certification system will be launched in 2022 and it was developed in accordance with the IUCN Global Standard for NbS. This development will also be crucial in achieving the objectives of the [WCC-2020-Res-114 - Integrated solutions to the climate change and biodiversity crises](#), adopted in Marseille. More specifically, point 5.b calls on governments "to support the deployment of Nature-based Solutions (NbS) that promote biodiversity conservation while contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation, appropriately involving the actors concerned at the relevant scales, and that deliver significant multiple benefits for climate mitigation, adaptation, biodiversity and people, thereby contributing to the achievement of various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)". Lastly, IUCN launched the [first Assessment of IUCN NbS Global Standard in Mediterranean urban areas](#): an evidence-based report on the benefits of NbS to cities in the Mediterranean region, in line with the Resolution [WCC-2020-Res-031 - The implementation of nature-based solutions in the Mediterranean Basin](#). With regards to EU policy, these developments will be essential in achieving the climate related targets set out in the EU Green Deal, in particular those set out in the EU Climate Law and the Fit for 55 Package. For example, the preamble of the [EU Climate Law](#) recognises the **benefits that Nature-based solutions can offer with regards to climate change mitigation**, adaptation and biodiversity protection. Furthermore, Article 5 comma 4 states: "[...In their national adaptation strategies, Member States shall take into account the particular vulnerability of the relevant sectors, inter alia, agriculture, and of water and food systems, as well as food security, and promote nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based adaptation...]".



Ecosystem Restoration

The World Conservation Congress in Marseille also saw the launch of the new [NetworkNature](#) semester theme, a six-month focus within the NetworkNature project, of “[Nature-based solutions for ecosystem restoration](#)” which will delve into ecosystem restoration and benefits to biodiversity, looking into how NbS contribute to the restoration efforts. The semester will contribute to the newly launched UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and other regional initiatives such as the EU Nature Restoration Plan. This will be a fundamental line of work during the upcoming years, and **IUCN Members showed great support by adopting key resolutions such as [WCC-2020-Res-035 - Promoting IUCN leadership in the implementation of the UN Decade on Restoration 2021–2030](#)**. The resolution gives the mandate to IUCN to seize the opportunity given by the United Nations resolution and to place ecosystem restoration at the apex of the international environmental debate. This vote encourages all IUCN Members to take bold action to scale up efforts to prevent, bring to a halt and reverse the nature degradation at all scales. Other ecosystem-specific resolutions were also adopted in Marseille, such as [WCC-2020-Res-009 - Protecting and restoring endangered grassland and savannah ecosystems](#) and [WCC-2020-Res-017 - Protection of natural flows of water for the conservation of wetlands](#), which could **position IUCN as a key ally for the European Union in achieving the [EU Nature Restoration Plan](#)**, several Green Deal targets, the objectives set out in the EU environmental acquis and the commitments under existing international conventions, e.g. Ramsar Convention. In this context, IUCN Europe is closely following the discussion surrounding the development of legally binding EU targets on restoration.

IUCN Europe also contributed to several events during the Forum segment of the World Conservation Congress. These included the CitiesWithNature panel discussion *Then, now and what next? Thinking Big*, the IUCN ECARO round-table on *Scaling-up Nature-based Solutions for Climate Change Adaptation In conversation* and the event organised by youth representatives on *Youth involvement on Nature narratives and Nature-based solutions in the international decision making processes context*.

Forests

A thematic area of fundamental importance for the IUCN European Work Plan and deeply interconnected with the two overarching goals above (sustainable land use and tackling climate change) is the protection and restoration of forest ecosystems. IUCN Europe considers this one of the main priorities for the next four years, and has already welcomed the relevance that forests were given in the EU policy context.

In line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030’s goal to strictly protect all remaining old-growth forest in Europe and to restore degraded forest ecosystems, IUCN work on protecting European forests was enhanced after the Marseille Congress. **Members voted [almost unanimously](#) for [WCC-2020-Res-127 on strengthening the protection of primary and old-growth forests in Europe and facilitating their restoration where possible](#)**, which followed the Hawaii Resolution 6.045 for the Protection of primary forests, including intact forest landscapes. The resolution encourages State Members in Europe to promote a legal framework in favour of the conservation and restoration of primary and old-growth forests, with actions to set the strict protection of primary and old-growth forests as a goal for the European Green Deal, and promote its implementation through the Biodiversity Strategy of the European Union, the European Forest Strategy, the Natura 2000 network, the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, national forest strategies and regional initiatives. To do so **the Resolution calls, inter alia, for a ban on timber sourcing from primary and old-growth forests**. The resolution will also be fundamental in supporting another crucial component of



the EU Green Deal, the [EU Forest Strategy](#). **IUCN Europe will continue working on protecting forest in Europe, aiming to provide a space for stakeholders for a constructive dialogue.** Related work has already happened, e.g. during the [IUCN event co-organised with the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU in early 2021](#), through various initiative, e.g. [SINCERE project](#), and with its extensive expertise.

Linked with the above resolutions, another key area of IUCN Europe's work was reinforced by the Members' decisions at Congress, namely **supporting halting illegal deforestation globally.** [Resolution WCC-2020-Rec-011 on the fight against imported deforestation and Resolution WCC-2020-Res-108 on deforestation and agricultural commodity supply chains](#) will be key in guiding IUCN's efforts. While having a broader geographical scope, both resolutions are strongly linked with the EU's efforts in this area. For example, resolution 11 recalls the European regulations on agrofuels, including the revision of the 2018 Renewable Energies Directive and the Delegated Act on Indirect Land-Use Change (ILUC), and recommends to state a range of actions including taking specific measures to encourage the consumption of agricultural and non-agricultural products that do not contribute to deforestation. **IUCN Europe will continue its involvement in and provision of input to this debate through the EU Commission's multi-stakeholder platform to tackle global deforestation and forest degradation, as well as in the context of the process to develop the upcoming EU legislation on imported deforestation.**

2.3. Integrating Nature in cities

IUCN Europe serves as the global hub for IUCN's urban work, not least by hosting the [IUCN Urban Alliance](#). As such, IUCN Europe was deeply involved in all urban components of the IUCN Congress proceedings.

On the opening day of the IUCN Congress, the inaugural [IUCN Local Action Summit](#) took place. Its objectives were to showcase and galvanise the efforts of subnational governments (at all levels) and their partners to deliver positive conservation outcomes, make the case for investing in nature-based solutions as part of a green recovery, and exact bold commitments for conservation action. From the Mayor of Paris to the Lord Provost of Glasgow, and from the Mayor of Tunis to the President of Curridabat, a dozen leaders of subnational governments took part. They announced an array of ambitious action pledges: planting millions of trees, eliminating single-use plastics, electrifying public transport systems, and reaching net zero by 2030. In alignment with the [Edinburgh Process](#) and pertaining [Edinburgh Declaration](#), the IUCN Local Action Summit served to raise the profile of cities within the conservation community and shored up support for the adoption of a renewed and strengthened 'Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity' as part of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Discussions continued at the Urban Planet Pavilion where some 10 events were organised covering topics ranging from environmental human rights to nature-based solutions.

Recognising the agency of cities to innovate, lead and act for nature, IUCN Members adopted **two urban motions: [WCC-2020-Res-067](#) calling for a strengthening of the IUCN Urban Alliance, and [WCC-2020-Dec-138](#) on including subnational governments in IUCN's membership.** The latter essentially paves the way for the voices of cities and regions to be heard in the heart of the conservation community.



Additionally, the [IUCN Urban Nature Index](#)—a new knowledge product for measuring the ecological performance of cities—was unveiled. This tool will be incorporated into the [IUCN Contributions for Nature](#) platform and rolled out over the course of 2022.

The main outcome document of the IUCN Congress, the Marseille Manifesto, also includes an important urban commitment: “Over 30 subnational governments, cities, partner organisations and IUCN agreed to expand universal access to high-quality green spaces and to enhance urban biodiversity in 100 cities, representing around 100 million citizens by 2025, and assessing their impact according to the IUCN Urban Nature Index.”

2.4. Reshaping our Economy

The IUCN Europe Work Plan aims to explore and the intricate relationship between **circular economy and biodiversity**. During the World Conservation Congress, **the EU Circular Talk “[The circular economy - a transformative approach to tackle key drivers of biodiversity loss](#)” was launched, by IUCN Europe, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, L'Institut National de l'Economie Circulaire (INEC), the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra and DG Environment**. The session revolved around the impacts that resource extraction and processing have on biodiversity and on ecosystem services. Participants agreed that to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, nature conservation and restoration efforts on their own will not be enough.

As expressed by the IPBES, we need to rethink our production and consumption systems. The transition to a circular economy offers an actionable framework for such transformative change, redesigning the economy towards a nature-positive future, which includes tackling the overexploitation of resources, GHG emissions, and pollution associated with the current take-make-waste economy. **IUCN Europe is currently working on a new report aimed at highlighting the need to & providing policy recommendations for the protection biodiversity during the transition to a circular and greener economic system**. This crucial component of our work will support the implementation of several EU policies that have been recently adopted, such as the new [Circular Economy Action Plan](#) and the [Zero Pollution Action Plan](#).

Another priority for the next four years, in Europe and globally, is the economic recovery from the global pandemic. IUCN advocates for putting nature at the earth of the several stimulus packages that are being developed and implemented. This a fundamental pillar in IUCN’s work going forward and thus IUCN has initiated the [Nature-based recovery strategic initiative](#). This action plan aims at directing at least 10% of overall investments to nature and at scaling up investments in NbS. In Marseille, IUCN Europe organised the [Strategic Discussion during the Members Assembly on structuring economies in a post COVID-19 world](#) (one of the three strategic discussions during the Assembly). Case studies from different regions of the world and the different perspectives from our panellists illustrated some of the opportunities, challenges and positive developments that the stimulus packages faced in their drafting and implementation. This discussion is also aligned with IUCN European programme Area of Work on supporting the development of a genuine sustainable finance system. The results from this Strategic Discussion, coupled with the abovementioned initiative, can be of support to the EU and its Member States’ efforts of transitioning to an economic system that places nature at its centre. The speeches made by panellists also indicated the need for strong common frameworks and initiatives such as the EU Sustainable Finance Taxonomy could provide that.



Some Resolutions from the IUCN Congress in Marseille can help the EU debate, including, [WCC-2020-Res-056 on Biodiversity financing](#), which recommends to states to integrate biodiversity goals and considerations into the national development plans and policies of key economic sectors and [WCC-2020-Res-057 on accounting for biodiversity: encompassing ecosystems, species and genetic diversity](#), which calls for Members and partners, especially national governments and multilateral institutions to test, implement and apply the SEEA accounting for biodiversity in all relevant aspects of their work. With the latter, IUCN Members also demonstrated their support of the UN and of the EU in adopting a new statistical framework to better account for biodiversity and ecosystems in national economic planning and policy decision-making, and can help in the current efforts of the EC to develop an ecosystems accounting module and in the revision of the Regulation on European Environmental Economic Accounts (EEEA) to expand its coverage to include a new module on natural capital accounting, fully consistent with the UN framework. The renewed focus of IUCN in the recovery stimulus packages and sustainable finance will be complementary to the European Union's efforts. As almost all national recovery plans have been presented to the EU Commission, there will be the need to monitor their implementation to ensure that the required amount of funds will be devolved to biodiversity and climate. IUCN, through its initiative and the European Regional office, aims to support relevant EU institutions in this endeavour. Lastly, IUCN Members at Congress also adopted resolution [WCC-2020-Rec-109 Increasing funding for biodiversity in developing countries](#) which calls, inter alia, for the increase of the share of grants devoted exclusively to biodiversity in developing countries and which is greatly aligned with the European Commission's commitment to [double its external funding for biodiversity](#).

2.5. Healthy Ocean

With regards to oceanic and marine environment, a key focus of IUCN in Europe is on marine protected areas and ecosystem restoration. Ranging from nature-based solutions to our work on urban biodiversity in coastal communities, there are some emblematic resolutions adopted in Marseille, such as the one calling for [Protection of deep-ocean ecosystems and biodiversity through a moratorium on seabed mining \(WCC-2020-Res-122\)](#) and the [call to withdraw draft-permit mining of fossil fuels underneath UNESCO World Heritage Site Wadden Sea \(WCC-2020-Rec-133\)](#). These resolutions help to complement the current EU discussion on protecting marine biodiversity and align with the EU Biodiversity Strategy's call to: "advocate in international negotiations that marine minerals in the international seabed area cannot be exploited before the effects of deep-sea mining on the marine environment, biodiversity and human activities have been sufficiently researched, the risks are understood and the technologies and operational practices are able to demonstrate no serious harm to the environment, in line with the precautionary principle".

The Congress further underscored the importance of healthy and resilient oceans by adopting a wide range of resolutions, such as [WCC-2020-Res-113 on Restoring a peaceful and quiet ocean](#), addressing noise pollution in the ocean, useful for the EU in the context of the planned review of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive by 2023 mentioned in the [EU Zero Pollution Action Plan](#), and [WCC-2020-Res-025 Ecosystem conservation, restoration and remediation in the ocean](#), which advocates for an enhanced focus on marine ecosystem restoration and is in line with the EU's mission to protect and restore its waters embedded in the EU Green Deal and in the upcoming EU legally binding restoration targets.



On a more global perspective, the IUCN Members stressed the importance of coral reefs with resolutions [WCC-2020-Res-032 on ocean impacts of climate change](#), [WCC-2020-Rec-020 on protection of herbivorous fish for improved coral community](#), [WCC-2020-Res-058 on safeguarding coral reefs from harmful chemicals in sunscreen](#) and [WCC-2020-Res-105 on conserving and protecting coral reefs through the post-2020 global biodiversity framework](#). This is another example of the alignment between IUCN and the EU. Both organisation recognise indeed the importance of coral reefs and the value of key international initiatives such as the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), of which both the EU and IUCN are members. In addition, IUCN Members adopted [WCC-2020-Res-128 on acting for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in the ocean beyond national jurisdiction](#), calling for a new and ambitious international legally binding instrument, under UNCLOS, on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of ABNJ, as well as encouraging for its rapid conclusion, adoption and early ratification and implementation. This resolution is extremely well aligned with the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030, in particular with chapter 4.2.1. on International Ocean Governance and the EU's will to display leadership in the BBN negotiations.

Microplastics

When dealing with the marine environment, the main focus of IUCN Europe during the past years has been on addressing plastic pollution thanks to a project supported by the Government of Monaco. An event in Marseille, organised by the IUCN European regional office, focused on microplastic pollution, its impact on biodiversity and what policies are needed to tackle this issue. Highlighting the EU Plastics Strategy, and in light of the recently launched new Circular Economy Action Plan under the EU Green Deal, this session invited representatives from the European Commission, the European Tyre and Rubber Manufacturers' Association, and IUCN experts, for a discussion about the challenges and the way forward for unintentionally released microplastics in Europe and beyond. The IUCN Brussels office will continue working in this direction through the participants in key stakeholders' fora, such as the Tyre and Road Wear Particles Platform.

Key resolutions in this context includes [WCC-2020-Res-019 on stopping the global plastic pollution crisis in marine environments by 2030](#), which all IUCN Members voted in favour, and [WCC-2020-Res-069 to eliminate plastic pollution in protected areas, with priority action on single-use plastic products](#). These resolutions will support the achievement of key EU policies such as the Zero Pollution Action Plan, the new Circular Economy Action Plan and the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030.

2.6. Support the protection of biodiversity in EU Overseas Territories - BEST

The EU projects BEST (Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of European Overseas) was represented at the Congress in Marseille through a **BEST pavilion, with the aim to provide past and current grantees with a platform to present their work to the world, thus reinforcing the ultimate aim of BEST to increase the visibility of Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) and Outermost Regions (ORs) as demonstrators of ecosystem-based approaches and key contributors to the achievement of EU and international biodiversity targets.**



The “BEST and beyond” pavilion hosted 31 speakers, both online and in-person, with a large array of expertise in the implementation of the BEST projects in the EU’s overseas – ORs, with the financial support of the European Commission (DG ENV), the French Biodiversity Office (*Office Français de la Biodiversité* – OFB) and the French Development Agency (*Agence Française de Développement* – AFD) & OCTs, with the financial support of the European Commission (DG INTPA). Some of the sessions can be accessed on the 2 programmes’ websites: [LIFE4BEST \(ORs\)](#) and [BEST 2.0+ \(OCTs\)](#). Moreover, all 153 projects funded to date under this initiative are presented in the BEST brochure, available [here](#).

The use of “local action as a powerful tool for change” appears as one of the commitments of the [Marseille Manifesto](#), whereby the Congress commits to “fostering a new approach with a meaningful role for all, from grassroots organisations to governments and communities to corporations”. The support to local actions is indeed the backbone of BEST, a programme that pursues to enable, empower and strengthen local authorities and civil society organisations in their commitment to their local development and the use of their local ecosystem services.

The establishment of a funding mechanism for biodiversity-related topics projects in the OCTs and ORs (materialised with the BEST projects that were presented at the World Conservation Congress) is necessary in order to ensure the continued support for the protection of biodiversity in the EU Overseas.

[Annex 1 to the Commission Implementing Decision](#) on the adoption of the multiannual work programme for the years 2021-2024 for the LIFE programme, 09.07.2021, art. 4.1.4. confirms the above and mentions that the Commission has identified several specific needs to be addressed through Other Actions, including A Small Grant Facility on Biodiversity (BEST). *“Drawing on the experience of the small grants schemes in the frame of the EU’s BEST initiative, calls for proposals will be launched for awarding small grants (max EUR 100 000 of EU cofinancing) in the Outermost Regions and the Overseas Countries and Territories on biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration and sustainable use of ecosystem services, including ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation. (...) EU co-financing is maximum 100% of eligible costs”.*



3. Communication

The IUCN Congress presented an excellent opportunity for increasing communications activities and engaging with media outlets across the world. Around 400 journalists were accredited coming from 35 countries, making this Congress a rare opportunity to interact with media, promote IUCN’s work, such as the IUCN Red Lists, reinforce existing relationships with journalists and forge new connections. Two staff from the IUCN European Regional Office were seconded to the Congress Communications Unit, contributing to the overall communications work.

Media Engagement

The IUCN Congress attracted unprecedented media attention both before, during and after the event. The total number of media stories is yet to be quantified, but reputable global outlets such as the Guardian, Reuters, Al Jazeera and the Financial Times all publishing several articles related to the Congress. European media outlets were no exception to this, with regular coverage in Politico Europe and articles featuring in Le Monde, Euractiv, ENDS Europe and Contexte. In the context of the Congress, the acting Director of the IUCN Europe office was invited for an interview by Politico Europe which was a full-length article. Similarly, the Head of Policy and Programme was invited for an interview with ENDS Europe which also featured prominently as a full-length article.



Fig. 2: 5 of the 6 articles featuring in The Age of Extinction section of the Guardian newspaper are related to the IUCN Congress.

Social Media

The social media accounts of IUCN global and IUCN Europe were particularly lively for the Congress with a considerable increase in posts, engagements and impressions compared with previous months. The congress hashtag - #IUCNCongress – had a reach of over 2.2 million with over 350 thousand interactions. The IUCN Europe accounts saw an impressive boost in followers, engagements, impressions and mentions (see figure 6 below).

28 day summary with change over previous period

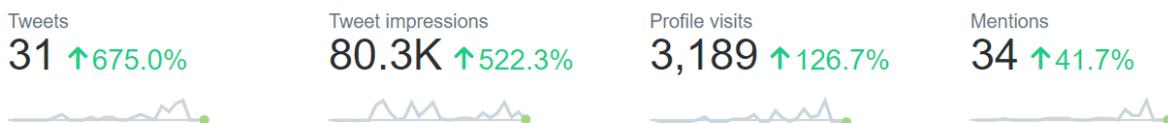


Fig. 3: The background statistics for the IUCN Europe Twitter account after the Congress in comparison to the previous 28 days. There is a considerable increase in all areas.



4. Marseille Outcomes and the way forward

The IUCN Congress revitalised the entire conservation community, especially after almost two years of virtual meetings. It created a space where the much needed multi-stakeholder exchange of views on how to best protect our planet could take place. It gave a platform to and supported Indigenous Peoples in their fight for their rights. It facilitated youth representatives to engage directly with experts and policy-makers. And, most importantly, it catalysed action, as testified by the [Marseille Manifesto](#), a document that captures key messages globally relevant which relate to the IUCN Congress. An important sentence included in the Manifesto called on the UN to recognise and implement the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, a milestone that was indeed [achieved a month later](#) at the Human Rights Council. [IUCN welcomed this historic decision](#), which EU Member States could implement in Europe, and consider its inclusion in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

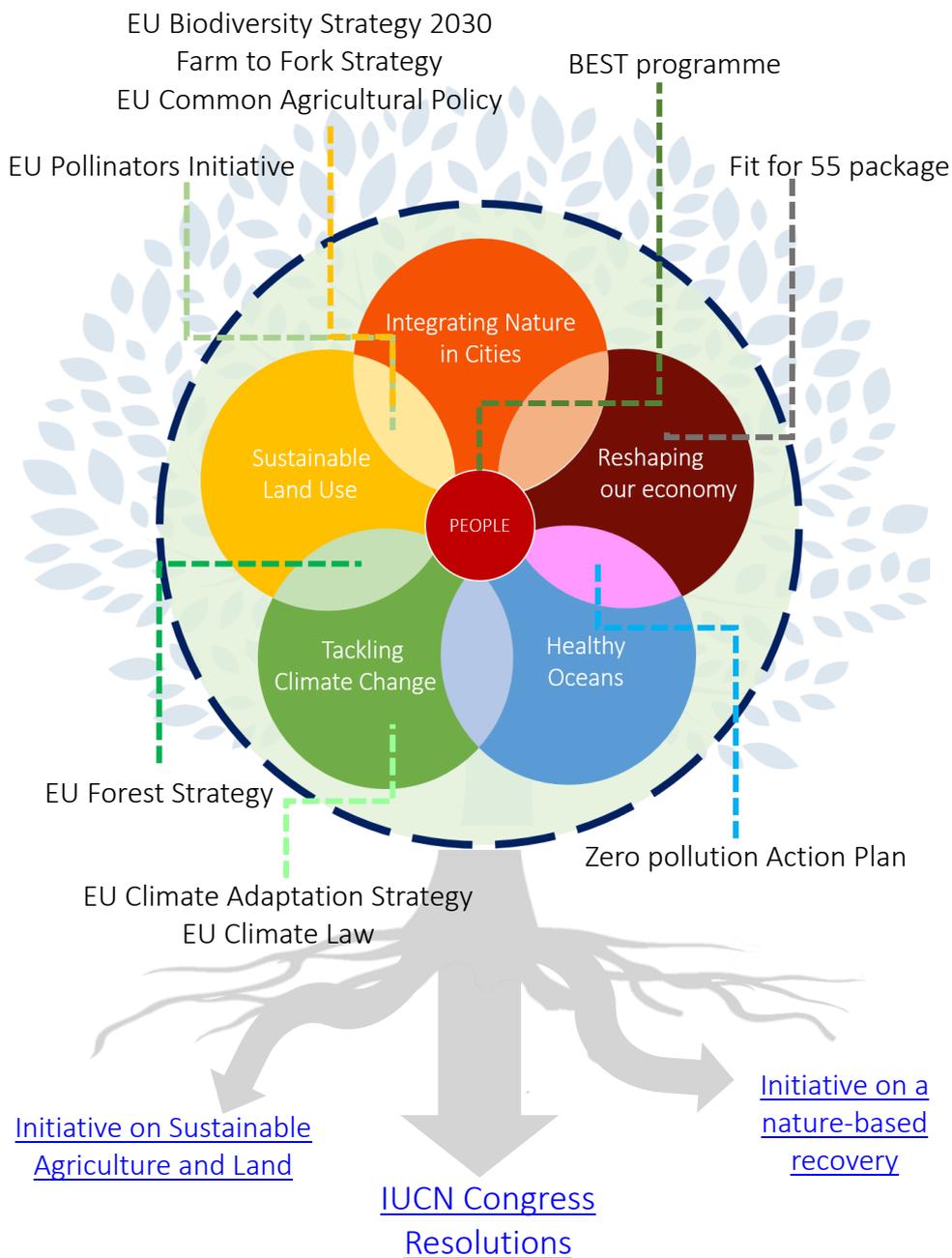
Amongst the key commitments included in the Manifesto:

- **Greece committed to reduce overfishing by establishing no-takes zones in 10% of their territorial waters by 2030 and to reduce marine plastic pollution by 60%**, among other commitments announced by Greece Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis.
- **France committed to achieve 30% of protected areas nationally by 2022 and 5% of its Mediterranean maritime area under strong protection by 2027**, help organising a One Ocean Summit, accelerate the fight against imported deforestation and protect forests with the Alliance for the Conservation of Rainforests, and promote a treaty on plastic pollution. Furthermore, the host country committed to include financial risks linked to the loss of biodiversity in economic and financial analyses and strengthen investments favourable to biodiversity, in particular, nature-based solutions to support the ecological transition in agriculture, forests, soils and carbon sinks.
- El Salvador, Belize, Pakistan, Chile and Region Sud and France committed to restore a collective total of 5.5 million hectares, **increasing the total [Bonn Challenge commitments to over 215 million hectares](#)**, while the Government of Germany has allocated €20 million to IUCN to establish a Forest Landscape Restoration technical expert hub.
- **15 new countries commitments to the IUCN Green List Standard**, totalling more than 30 million hectares of protected and conserved areas, bringing the number of participating 'Green List' countries to more than 70 worldwide.
- IUCN Members, supported by the IUCN National and Regional Committees, commit to deliver contributions to the Nature 2030 IUCN Programme and global goals for nature, and document those through the "[Contributions for Nature Platform](#)".
- **Five multi-national companies** – Kering, Holcim, L'Occitane, LVMH, Pernod Ricard – with a combined annual turnover of USD 92 billion and close to 300,000 employees **committed to restore and enhance biodiversity** through nature-positive corporate strategies and actions. These commitments will be integrated into their operational landscapes and supply chains, measured and reported on.



The power and reach of IUCN is unique thanks to its diverse membership and expertise. Achieving the goals set out in the resolutions, in the global programme and in the European Work Plan will require the support and coordination of all IUCN constituents. Governments, civil society, the private sector, academia, youth and indigenous peoples need to act as one. And action must start now. Key international summits for the environment are taking place or will take place soon, including the COP 15 of the UN CBD, that will agree on a new Global Biodiversity Framework for the next decade. IUCN will be, as it has always been, the voice of nature and will work unrelentingly to support the design and implementation of science-based international strategies. IUCN Europe will fulfil its role of acting as a link between the work of the Union and nature protection in the European continent. This will be achieved through evidence-based informed policy and multilateral dialogue. Science tells us it is time to act, IUCN Congress gave us more energy, and the resolutions, Programme and Work Plan adopted show us the path.

It is now up to the IUCN family -Secretariat, Members, commissions and partners- to get to work!



For more information, please contact Alberto Arroyo Schnell, Head of Policy and Programme of the IUCN European Regional Office, at: alberto.arroyo@iucn.org

