

## **Name of the Union**

International Union For Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

## **Activities' Report - Year 2018**

## **Delegate/Author Name**

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### **1. Introduction**

#### **The mission**

The IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) is the largest global organization for biodiversity conservation. Founded in 1948, starting in the 1960s it launched a research program aimed at identifying globally threatened taxa and documenting its conservation status. The main objective is to encourage and assist companies around the world to preserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is fair and environmentally sustainable, through effective management and the search for related solutions to combat global problems, including climate change and sustainable development. The IUCN has established objective criteria on which to define the conservation status of species at global and local level. In particular, the evaluation of the conservation status is based on the categories and criteria of the Red List version 3.1 (2001), which provides for the assignment of the species to one of the nine risk categories. The IUCN is supported by over 1200 affiliated organizations, including governmental and non-governmental agencies and 6 expert committees (CEC, Commission on Education and Communication; CEESP, Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy; WCEL, World Commission on Environmental Law; CEM, Commission on Ecosystem Management); SSC, Species Survival Commission; WCPA, World Commission on Protected Areas).

### **2. Main activities carried out by IUCN during 2018 relevant for Italy and for CNR**

In 2018, the IUCN continued to emphasize the importance of integrating global strategies and nature conservation policies and called for concrete actions to achieve these goals. The program for Europe (**IUCN European Work Program 2017-2020**) reflects the priorities of the European partners of the IUCN in order to guide the work of the European regional office (EURO) and ensure joint implementation. The main points of the program include: nature-based solutions and climate change mitigation; IUCN Red List of Ecosystems; IUCN Red List of Threatened Species; development and use of the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and Green List of Protected areas; biodiversity and ecosystem services in the outermost regions of the EU and in overseas countries and territories; marine conservation; forest restoration and conservation of the Arctic region. In particular, the importance was highlighted in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2017 -2020, agreed at the tenth Conference of the Parties in Nagoya (Aichi Prefecture, Japan), which emphasized that biodiversity is an essential element for the functioning of ecosystems and for the provision of ecosystem services. It is also underlined that the process of biodiversity loss

has not yet been stopped. Biodiversity conservation can contribute to human well-being and poverty eradication. The Aichi Targets include both specific objectives to be achieved at a global level, and reference indications for the identification of national objectives, and the Parties are

invited to identify their targets within this framework. It is important to resolve the causes of the loss of biodiversity by increasing its importance within government programs and in society. Among the strategic objectives is to halve the rate of loss of natural habitats, including forests and sustainably manage agricultural areas, identify invasive alien species (IAS) and increase carbon fixation through conservation and the restoration of at least 15% of degraded ecosystems, contributing to the mitigation of climate change, as established in the Paris agreement and as confirmed in the Cop24 in Katowice, Poland, in November 2018.

2018 was an important year for Europe and for Italy, where the main focus was the state of implementation in the world of the **IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas**, aimed at increasing the number of protected areas. The Green List is based on 4 general standards (Global Standards) defined at international level: Good Governance; Sound Design and Planning; Effective Management; Successful Conservation Outcomes. The process aims to assess and strengthen management effectiveness considering that over 24% of Protected Areas in the world can only be considered "paper parks" and only 20% of Protected Areas are conserved according to efficacy criteria. The Green List is a voluntary process, based on a certification program, which aims to encourage effective management of Protected Areas, measured through assessment standards. The management of the Green List program is shared between the IUCN Secretariat (Central Office) and IUCN WCPA (IUCN World Commission of Protected Areas), which guarantee technical support for the process. **As far as Italy is concerned, the National Expert Group for the evaluation of the IUCN Green List Areas was formed (EAGL = Expert Assessment Group for IUCN Green List). Work has begun on adapting the general international indicators (General Standard Indicators) to the Italian context.** As soon as the set of Indicators is validated, it will follow the possibility of participating by the Protected Areas that intend to join the Green List process. **The EAGL group will be supported by implementing partners (Federparchi-Europarc Italia and WWF Italia).** In Europe, besides Italy, work is being done on organizing Green List Working Groups in France. **It is also working at European level for the creation / applicability of a Green List adapted to the sites of the Natura 2000 Network.**

### **Evaluation of the state of nature and its conservation**

The IUCN Task Force is working on redefining the Targets to be achieved after 2020, both at European and continental level. As far as the Target is concerned, the CBD has requested comments from the participating nations. It will be necessary to start a technical comparison on a national scale regarding the topics of interest. **As far as Italy is concerned, the Italian Committee proposed to focus on key global issues, including climate change, ecosystem services and all the actions necessary to raise awareness among the populations.**

**The IUCN has expanded and strengthened the global database of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), which contribute significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity.**

**The results of the assessment, according to the IUCN criteria for terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, published in 2018, emphasize that 48% of the habitats are at risk, and the status has not improved since the first assessment that dates back 10 years. In 2018 Finland published the most complete Red List of ecosystems in the world (400 types of Habitat).** The Birds and Habitats Directive and the Natura 2000 Network are key points of biodiversity conservation in Europe.

## **Invasive alien species**

**Under the 2017-2020 Program, the importance of actions aimed at containing invasive alien species (IAS) and the deepening of knowledge focused on management is underlined. The spread of IAS is one of the biggest threats to biodiversity worldwide and is a significant economic problem due to the damage these species can cause to agriculture, fishing and other human activities.** In Europe there are currently more than 12,000 exotic plants, animals, fungi and microorganisms and about 15% of these species are invasive and their number is rapidly growing. Also in Italy the number of alien species is constantly growing. Available data show that the alien species introduced since 1500 are 2,029. Out of 778 species for which the year of introduction is known, the most important group is represented by vascular plants and vertebrates (first of all freshwater fish, followed by reptiles, mammals, amphibians and birds). To counter the IAS, **the European Union has adopted a Regulation (No. 1143/2014)**, which came into force on 1 January 2015 to address the problem of IAS for the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services, as well as to minimize the risks to human health and the economic impact that these species may have. The Regulation provides for three types of interventions: **prevention, eradication and management**. The list of high-risk IAS species was drawn up on the basis of scientific criteria, approved by a Committee of States. In total 37 of the species proposed meet all the criteria.

## **Climate change**

Climate change is one of the problems to be faced for environmental conservation and sustainable development. In particular, forests contribute to the mitigation of climate change by absorbing and storing carbon. **This assessment is one of the objectives of the IUCN through the conservation status.**

### **3. Activities carried on by (Loretta Gratani) within the Union during 2017 and impact on the Italian scientific community**

Loretta Gratani participated in the meetings and discussions proposed by the IUCN Italian Committee on the various topics discussed, including the participation in the events of the next IUCN World Conservation Congress which will take place in June 2020 in Marseille.

### **4. Evaluation of the participation in terms of benefits and membership cost**

I believe that the role of the CNR within the IUCN is important because it allows participation in all respects, with the right to vote, in the elaboration of conservation strategies for ecosystems, species and the subsistence of populations in fragile countries compared to those of the most developed countries. While considering that participation in International Scientific Bodies such as the IUCN entails a burden, I believe however that the cost / benefit ratio of such participation is in favor of the CNR, which in this way assumes an important role at a global level on extremely current issues.

### **5. Evaluation of Italians' attendance and how to improve interest and involvement**

**The IUCN emphasizes that 22.5% of species in Europe is at risk of extinction** and that 650 plant taxa in Europe are considered extinct (EX) extinct in the wild (EW) or in a critical situation. **The European Red List will be increased to safeguard diversity in Europe.** In such context, the activities of the IUCN National Committee were conducted with the aim of involving Italian members in their national and international activities, as requested in the new IUCN strategy regarding online consultation as well as in the activities of the World Congress. They concerned in particular:

- the Italian IUCN Committee supported the national Red List process with IUCN criteria. The first Italian Red List version Vertebrates and the Red List on Policy Species and other threatened plant species was created. We underline the contribution for the collection of useful information for national coordination, with the Italian Members present in the international Commissions, LIPU BidLife Italia and ISPRA who are available for the evaluation of the species to be included in the national Red List and in the supply of the necessary data for filling in the forms.
- The selection of Italian experts for the evaluation of the IUCN Green List Areas (EAGL= Expert Assessment Group for IUCN Green List), whose representative who maintains relations with the IUCN is Fulvio Cerfolli.
- The elaboration of the National Red Lists with IUCN criteria
- Shares for Invasive exotic species (IAS)
- Program of interventions for the next IUCN World Conservation Congress to be held in June 2020 in Marseille.

#### **6. Italian experts with important roles within the Union or within related Commissions and Programs**

PIERO GENOVESI, Member of the Steering Committee - IUCN Species Survival Commission.

#### **7. Conclusions**

The activities undertaken by the IUCN underline the fundamental role played at world level for the conservation of nature in all its aspects and the need to implement strategic changes at financial, technological, industrial and governance levels, inspiring young people to develop their skills and networks. To this end, it is essential to cooperate with an integrated approach also to ensure the sustainability of indigenous peoples. To date, the IUCN is a global point of reference. In this context, the role of the CNR within the IUCN is important because it allows participation in the elaboration of ecosystem conservation strategies, of species and the subsistence of the populations of the most fragile countries compared to those of the more developed countries.

Loretta Gratani

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