

IUCN

International Union for Conservation of Nature

Activities' Report - Year 2021

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1. Introduction

IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) is a membership Union composed of both government and civil society organisations. It harnesses the experience, resources and reach of its more than 1,400 Member organisations and the input of more than 17,000 experts. This diversity and vast expertise make IUCN the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.

Founded in 1948, starting in the 1960s The IUCN launched a 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 to define the conservation status of species at global and local level and based on categories and criteria of the Red List version 3.1 (2001), which provides for the assignment of the species to one of the risk categories.

The activities of the IUCN are carried out by 6 committees of experts:

- IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC). It groups together experts in marine and terrestrial animal and plant species, and is structured in many technical groups of specialists on various topics (taxonomic groups, single species, species of specific environments, etc.)
- IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA). It mainly deals with issues related to protected areas, it is also organized in specialized thematic groups
- IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL). It includes experts in environmental legislation and environmental law by providing specialized knowledge and assistance to strengthen the legal basis of nature conservation and sustainable development through the conceptual advancement of environmental principles, norms and laws and by developing the capacity of communities to benefit from them.
- IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy (CEESP). Through its members, it promotes practical and informative actions for the harmonization of nature conservation with the main social, cultural, environmental and economic criticalities.
- IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (CEC). It brings together experts in Environmental Education and Communication and promotes the definition and application of sustainable solutions through leading communication, learning and knowledge management in IUCN.
- IUCN Commission on Ecosystems Management (CEM). The Commission promotes ecosystem-based approaches for the management of terrestrial and marine landscapes and ecosystems, provides assistance and support for ecosystem-based management and promotes resilient socio-ecological systems to address global challenges.

2. Main activities carried on by IUCN during 2021 relevant for Italy and for CNR

The most relevant activity of IUCN during 2021 was the World Conservation Congress held Marseille from 3-11 September. The congress had a strong focus on post-COVID recovery, biodiversity and climate crises, and the role and rights of indigenous peoples in conservation. The Congress was structured around seven main themes: landscapes; fresh water; oceans; climate change; rights and governance; economic and financial systems; and knowledge, innovation and technology.

During the Assembly, the more than 1500 IUCN members discussed and voted on the motions presented by IUCN members, elected a new leadership and approved the next IUCN program for 2021-2024 “Nature 2030: Union in Action”. Razan Al Mubarak was elected as the new president of the IUCN. The members of the IUCN also elected the commission chairs and the regional councilors.

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 Kiszal (Hungary) and Mr Samad-John Smaranda (Romania).

The Congress outcomes most relevant for Europe covered different thematic area): agriculture, biodiversity conservation and invasive alien species, urban biodiversity, protected areas, nature-based solutions, ecosystem restoration, forest and oceans.

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 agro-ecological 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) was approved the resolution on “Ensuring adequate funding for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species” (WCC-2020-Res-131) that 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. 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.

On protected areas the 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.

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.

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”.

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.

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.

Finally, on urban biodiversity 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. 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...".

3. Activities carried on by Paolo Colangelo within the Union during 2021 and impact on the Italian scientific community

The main activity carried out by CNR IUCN representative (Paolo Colangelo) were the participation to IUCN national meeting for the preparation of participation to the World Conservation Congress and the participation to the congress (remotely).

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

The IUCN is the world reference point for the conservation of nature and biodiversity. At the same time, Italy is considered a biodiversity hotspot and as such has a strong interest in interacting with international organisms such as the IUCN in charge of defining strategies for the management and conservation of species and ecosystems. The CNR, through participation in IUCN activities, has the opportunity to enhance the expertise present in the body and at the same time has the opportunity to participate in the choices in the field of environmental policy that have a strong impact also on the national scene.

Due to covid pandemic crisis the activity carried out in last year were mainly related to congress participation. Anyhow the presence of CNR in the IUCN context remains strategic especially for the next PNRR where CNR is the coordinator of the National Center on Biodiversity.

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

Italy participates in the IUCN with three government institutions (CNR, ISPRA and PNCVD) and 18 non-governmental organizations. The activities of the IUCN are carried out through the participation of the various bodies involved in the initiatives announced by the national and international committee of the IUCN and through the participation of individual researchers and experts in the activities of the various commissions. For Italy there are numerous researchers, technologists and experts who are involved in various capacities in the initiatives of the IUCN, both national and international.

A strengthening of the Italian presence (and of the CNR) in the six IUCN commissions (SSC, WCPA, WCEL, CEESP, CEC, CEM) is desirable. Within the CNR the constitution of the working group on biodiversity of the DSSTTA (<https://dta.cnr.it/biodiversity/>) is expected improve the participation of CNR R&T to IUCN activities.

6. Italian experts with important roles within the Union or within related Commissions and Programs (if known)

For Italy Dr. Piero Genovesi is member of the SSC Steering Committee (2021-2025) and chair of the IUCN SSC ISSG, prof. Anna Loy is the chair of the IUCN SSC Otter Specialist Group and prof. Luigi Boitani is the chair of The Red List Committee

7. Conclusions

The IUCN is a global reference point for the management and protection of biodiversity. The participation of the CNR in the IUCN is important as it allows our institution, in synergy with the other member institutions, to participate in the development of conservation strategies for ecosystems and species.

The participation of the CNR in the IUCN is particularly strategic in this phase of defining the new European strategies for the environment and sustainability. This is particularly relevant considering the primary role that CNR will play in the next years through the PNRR and coordination of strategic activities such as the Biodiversity national center.

Signature

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'R. De Felice', written in a cursive style.

Place and date

Montelibretti 10/05/2022