

# IUCN External Review 2015

## Executive Summary





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## Acronyms

<b>CEC</b>	Commission on Education and Communication
<b>CEESP</b>	Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy
<b>CEM</b>	Commission on Ecosystem Management
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>FASU</b>	Framework of Action for Strengthening the Union
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility
<b>IBAT</b>	Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool
<b>IUCN</b>	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
<b>KBA</b>	Key Biodiversity Areas
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NRGF</b>	Natural Resources Governance Framework
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>RBM</b>	Results-Based Management
<b>RLTS</b>	Red List of Threatened Species
<b>SSC</b>	Species Survival Commission
<b>WANI</b>	Water and Nature Initiative
<b>WCC</b>	World Conservation Congress
<b>WCEL</b>	World Commission on Environmental Law
<b>WCPA</b>	World Commission on Protected Areas



## Executive Summary

**Created in 1948, IUCN is one of the world's oldest and largest global environmental organisations,** with more than 1,200 Institutional Members and close to 15,000 Commission Members. It produces, disseminates and mobilises science-based knowledge, standards and tools to inform practices, influence action, and develop policies to address biodiversity conservation and sustainable development concerns.

**IUCN and its Framework Partners have commissioned External Reviews of IUCN** every four years since 1991. The report on this 2015 External Review will be presented to IUCN Members at the next World Conservation Congress in Hawaii in 2016.

**The Review is intended to inform strategic and programmatic development processes** underway at IUCN, as led by the new Director General, Inger Andersen. It had three interrelated objectives:

- 1) To assess the relevance, effectiveness and impact of knowledge chains in the IUCN Programme;
- 2) To assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and lessons learned of working with scientific and technical networks of experts from the six IUCN Commissions; and
- 3) To assess the role and the niche of IUCN as a Union of governments, non-governmental organisations and individual scientists, and the fit-to-purpose of IUCN as an organisation.

## Methodology

**Guided by OECD-DAC's Evaluation Quality Standards and Guidelines,** the evaluation was utilisation-focused and used a mixed methods approach that included document review, extensive desk study, institutional and knowledge chain mapping, comparative analysis, three global surveys (of Institutional Members, Commission Members, and Secretariat staff), six focus group meetings, and face to face and virtual interviews with 203 stakeholders.

## Findings

### Clarifying IUCN's Niche

#### **IUCN's Niche and Stakeholder Perspectives**

**Consolidating its niche.** Since the last External Review in 2011, IUCN has made attempts to clarify and consolidate its niche (e.g. 2012 document on the Business Model of IUCN, 2013 Framework of Action to Strengthen the Union, internal consultation process). IUCN's niche statement captures IUCN's standard-setting role, policy-oriented work, and diverse and hybrid membership. However, it remains a work-in-progress, notably since it only hints at IUCN's extensive knowledge-based work and does not account for its convenor role.

**A global convenor.** Most consulted stakeholders perceive IUCN's niche as that of a global convenor, fulfilling a bridging role that leverages knowledge for impact. Internal IUCN stakeholders acknowledge the importance of IUCN's role as a convenor while emphasising different aspects of this role. Notably, stakeholders across all groups, including donors, feel that IUCN's critical consensus-building and policy-influencing roles could be developed yet further.

## Comparative Advantages of IUCN

**A comparative approach.** In an effort to bring to light IUCN's comparative strengths and shortcomings as a membership-based, convenor organisation in the field of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, IUCN was compared to a host of organisations.

**The centrality of knowledge production.** The comparison of IUCN with four other global convenor organisations (Brookings Institution, Aspen Institute, Demos, and the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research) suggests that the knowledge produced by or residing in such organisations (in the form of experts) is their key asset; scientific research or analytical capability is the lever for influencing policy and making an impact. IUCN similarly produces, acquires and deploys knowledge. However, IUCN's knowledge production role is disproportionate to the policy-influencing role conferred upon it as a major convenor. Of significance, IUCN is not tailoring knowledge for end-users effectively enough.

**Strategising its work with the private sector.** The comparison of IUCN with six other global conservation organisations (The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, Conservation International, World Resources Institute, Wetlands International, and the United Nations Environment Programme) highlights IUCN's strength as a convenor, including with the private sector. Four of the comparator organisations have taken on the private sector as a partner, client and sometimes donor in achieving conservation and sustainability goals. While IUCN is positioned differently because of its membership mix, how IUCN wishes to influence the private sector persists as an important strategic question.

**Challenges facing organisations with member associations.** The Review also compared IUCN to two other (anonymous) development organisations with member associations. It found that they face similar challenges to IUCN, despite being structured differently, as both NGOs and global networks. As organisations with member association, they all face challenges related to: aligning Members around a common agenda; diverse member perspectives vs. speaking with one voice; accountability vs. member autonomy; demonstrating results across the network; the use of volunteer professionals. The 2015 External Review provides insights on how to address and overcome these challenges, in ways tailored to the particularities of IUCN.

## Concluding thoughts

**IUCN is an organisation whose niche, among other things, is its ability to convene** different Commissions, Members, partners and other actors, intent on advancing conservation and sustainability outcomes. Comparison with global biodiversity conservation and sustainable development organisations (including Members of IUCN) has brought IUCN's niche as a convenor to the fore. Other organisations share some of the same assets as IUCN – influencing policy, using scientific evidence, setting standards – but none has the same convening power as IUCN.

**The authority underpinning this convening function** stems largely from the scientifically-informed work it undertakes, and its effort to inform the decision-making and practices of policy-makers, civil society and private sectors leaders and others across the global environment. While IUCN is perceived as an organisation that leverages knowledge for policy influence, there is as yet much work to be done to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness in this respect, a matter taken up throughout the External Review final report.

## Knowledge Products and Knowledge Chains

### Relevance of knowledge products

**Flagship and programme-based knowledge products.** The External Review examined the relevance, effectiveness, and management of four knowledge products: the Red List of Threatened Species (RLTS), Protected Planet, Natural Resources Governance Framework (NRGF), and the



Water and Nature Initiative (WANI) Toolkits. The first three are Flagship Knowledge Products and the last is a programme-based knowledge product.

**The centrality of the Red List of Threatened Species.** All surveyed stakeholder groups consider the RLTS to be the most relevant to the Union as a whole and to their own priorities. While 40-60% of respondents considered the other sampled knowledge products relevant, a significant percentage was not able to judge – suggesting that the other knowledge products are not as visible across the Union as the RLTS. In other words, IUCN is under-showcasing its diversity of knowledge products, with some of these underperforming as a result.

**Sampled knowledge products** are predominantly and appropriately demand-driven, having been developed in response to articulated needs. They reflect an organisation whose thematic niche is appropriately situated at the intersection of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. This suggests that continued ‘soul searching’ on whether IUCN is or should be more of a biodiversity conversation *or* a sustainable development organisation is based on a false dichotomy that detracts from the strategic, programmatic, conceptual and practical complementarities between them.

### **Effectiveness of knowledge products**

**Quality, consistency and branding of knowledge products.** IUCN declares itself to be ‘a leading provider of biodiversity knowledge, tools and standards used to influence policy, undertake conservation planning and guide action on the ground’.<sup>1</sup> One of the defining features of Flagship Knowledge Products is that they are based on six elements: IUCN-approved standards, rules and procedures, a dataset, tools, training and capacity-building to support application and use, and products per se. Currently, most but not all Flagship Knowledge Products are appropriately based on, or derive from IUCN-approved standards. This raises concerns about the quality, consistency, and branding of Flagship Knowledge Products and related sub-products for IUCN.

**Judging the quality of knowledge products.** For the time being, most surveyed stakeholders have confidence in the quality of RLTS data but less than half have confidence in Protected Planet data (through a high proportion not able to judge). Most stakeholders are not able to judge the quality of data and information informing the WANI toolkits. For a knowledge-based organisation, such disparities and lack of awareness are a matter of concern.

**Data concerns.** The more comprehensive are Flagship Knowledge Products, the more effective they have the potential to be. Bearing this in mind, the effectiveness of Flagship Knowledge Products is sometimes limited by the unavailability of data and also the extent of data coverage. In some cases, data simply does not exist and fieldwork is required to construct it, while in other cases the data sources have been identified, but integration has not yet been completed. It is notably difficult to access data from the private sector, regional organisations and certification schemes.

**Integrating Indigenous knowledge.** A Union of Institutional Members, Commissions and Secretariat, IUCN has traditionally made relatively little space for Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous knowledge. There is, as yet, no formal Membership category for Indigenous Peoples. And, Flagship Knowledge Products have traditionally been informed by hard and social science data, without explicitly seeking and including Indigenous knowledge. In recent years, IUCN has become much more intentional about engaging with Indigenous Peoples, seeking to recognise and integrate indigenous knowledge into IUCN approaches, methodologies and practices.

### **Knowledge Product Outcome Pathways**

**Knowledge products mobilised by IUCN constitute diverse knowledge chains,** favouring conservation and sustainability outcomes along multiple, often complementary pathways. Such outcomes could be increased from a more intentional and strategic mobilisation of knowledge

products along these multiple outcome pathways. The External Review considered the sampled knowledge products along six outcome pathways and found that:

- 1) **Policy:** Flagship Knowledge Products influence and inform global, regional and national policy processes and mechanisms in effective ways, but awareness of such outcomes across the Union varies significantly by knowledge product. In the surveys, the RLTS was perceived by Secretariat, Commission Members and Institutional Members to have had a positive impact on global and national policies. Perceptions of the impact of Protected Planet were significantly lower, and a very high percentage of survey respondents did not know.
- 2) **Action and practice:** Programme-based knowledge products influence global, regional and national level actions and practices throughout the world, notably as a resource for IUCN convening. For example, the WANI Toolkits have played an important role in the Global Water Programme as one component of a much larger strategy that has seen IUCN convene different actors, together intent on transforming policies and practices on the ground.
- 3) **Managing financial resources:** Biodiversity conservation and sustainable development outcomes are favoured when Flagship Knowledge Products influence and are used in the management and allocation of global public and private financial resource. A notable authoritative reference, the RLTS continues to inform the Global Environment Facility's resource allocation framework as well as investments made by several conservation funds. IUCN has recently been recognised as a Project Agency for the GEF, and is well-positioned to continue playing a leading role in the management of global funding for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.
- 4) **Targeting end users:** IUCN is effective at constructing a diversity of knowledge products, standards, tools and processes. Its effectiveness in generating biodiversity and sustainability outcomes is amplified when its knowledge products (as well as sub-products and tools) are targeted at specific end users. The Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT) demonstrates the value of targeting intended users, and provides a legitimate business model in which private and finance sector actors pay for knowledge-based services. Revenue generated through IBAT is largely being used to maintain the quality of Flagship Knowledge Product databases upon which IBAT and indeed, all of IUCN relies.
- 5) **Informing research:** Biodiversity conservation and sustainable development outcomes are favoured when knowledge products inform research projects. Flagship Knowledge Products are often cited in research publications. However, data on the use of both Flagship and programme-based knowledge products in peer-reviewed literature is not comprehensively compiled by IUCN.
- 6) **Accessibility:** The widespread and effective use of the RLTS and Protected Planet is constrained by their limited accessibility to multiple and diverse communities of users. These Flagship Knowledge Products are largely inaccessible to popular audiences and are under-utilised by, among others, sub-national, provincial and municipal actors as well as local communities intent on conservation action.

### **Knowledge Product Governance and Management**

**IUCN is aware that its knowledge nomenclature is unclear and a source of confusion** across the Union (e.g. knowledge products, sub-products, baskets, systems, platforms). The IUCN Council has put a hold on further knowledge nomenclature discussion and decision-making until certain building blocks are in place within the Union (e.g. KBA standard, development of the NRGF and People in Nature; renegotiation of the RLTS Partnership Agreement).

**Horizontal and vertical integration of knowledge products** is being pursued by IUCN, with varying degrees of planning and progress. Horizontal integration of Flagship Knowledge Products is moving forward appropriately, creating complementarities between them (e.g. in terms of data, end-user targeting and engagement, financial matters). Less in evidence but equally valuable, the pursuit of vertical integration may be understood as the development of 'baskets of knowledge'.

**Knowledge product governance.** In the period under review, IUCN was in the process of developing two new Flagship Knowledge Products, with varying degrees of success. In our assessment, the NRGF receives a mixed review in terms of the development process and the outcomes to date. The review finds that shortcomings in NRGF development stem from a lack of structurally appropriate and effective governance mechanisms.

### **Concluding thoughts**

**The six outcome pathways** discussed in this chapter, while distinct, should be understood not as exclusive but as complementary to one another. They reflect the fact that each knowledge product discussed in this report is constitutive of multiple knowledge chains and thus also multiple and diverse outcome pathways. These outcome pathways are simply and diversely understood as policy-oriented, action-based, financial, academic and popular.

**Cross-Union linkages.** Despite this, the outcome pathways that link the various and often disparate components of work at IUCN together are often unknown and invisible within the Union for the simple reason that linkages are either not being made or not being seen.

**Accessibility of knowledge products.** It also bears highlighting that for knowledge to reach communities of actual or potential users, it benefits from being produced and packaged in ways that renders this knowledge accessible. This is true of academic users, policy-oriented and corporate users, as well as community-based users and young professionals.

**The development of new Flagship Knowledge Products/Baskets.** Given the centrality of knowledge to IUCN, the development of new Flagship Knowledge Products/Baskets is a matter of major importance. Despite this, IUCN has provided wanting leadership, oversight and support on the development of the NRGF (a new Flagship Knowledge Product), a matter currently being addressed.

### **IUCN Commissions**

#### **Relevance of Commissions**

**IUCN Commissions are an important asset, serving a range of knowledge-based functions.** They collate, produce and/or package knowledge; share knowledge; develop policy proposals; inform IUCN programme development and implementation; provide advice as required; and introduce new ideas to IUCN.

**The rationale and thematic areas of all six Commissions are considered relevant.** They are able to absorb other contemporary issues such as climate change, and to address other emerging issues through increased integration and joint initiatives that involve more than one Commission. The Commissions act as a vehicle for engagement that is under-valued and under-utilised. IUCN Commissions are insufficiently recognised and appreciated as multi-functional membership networks.

**The planned activities of all six Commissions** are aligned with at least one of the three programme priorities articulated in the IUCN Programme Framework. Nonetheless, stakeholders have divergent opinions about whether, and the extent to which, the Commissions are aligned with the IUCN Programme Framework (or priorities), the Programme's results and indicators, and/or

the Business Model. It is important for information about Commissions, their activities and varying outputs, to be more visible across the Union and beyond.

### **Effectiveness of Commissions**

**Across the Union, views are mixed concerning the overall effectiveness of Commissions** within IUCN. Perspectives vary concerning what the Commissions should be doing, and how different components of the IUCN system are contributing to effectively leveraging the Commissions. Overall, it is difficult for many people within the Union to assess the effectiveness of the Commissions. This is partially due to the fact that IUCN Commissions are inconsistent in their use of available reporting structures, such that the results of the work of all of the Commissions and their contributions to the IUCN programme are inconsistently captured and reported. This is a key area of concern at IUCN.

**On the size of Commissions.** Throughout the External Review period, the issue of Commission size was frequently raised. The External Review Team has concluded that while there is no single, ideal size for Commissions (given that each Commission is unique, their contributions to IUCN are different and diverse, and their activities ebb and flow over time), there are merits to Commissions with a larger general Membership and with Steering Committees comprising top experts in their field.

**Some Commissions are relatively ineffective at communicating** with other parts of IUCN and even with their own Members. This has implications for building relationships, knowledge and information exchange, and for transparency within and outside Commissions. In addition, the process of invitation/application and appointment of new Commission Members is considered unclear and lacking transparency.

**Commissions operate in a hierarchical manner** with considerable power invested in the Chair. For the most part, the strong leadership of Chairs continues to be appreciated and supported by Members. This responds to the fact that Commission Members are dispersed and loosely connected. Members of the Union also like to have a specific person with whom they can interact concerning the work of a Commission.

**The importance of the Commission Chair's role** requires institutional structures that ensure adequate processes for their selection, support and accountability. Their effectiveness is often undermined by lack of resources for a full-time Chair (or fully supported Chair) and for administrative support.

**The effectiveness of a Commission depends on the quality of its relationships** within the Union. Collaboration between Commissions and other parts of the Union remains modest overall, if judged against the One Programme Charter ideal, but is variable by Commission. Institutional Members want stronger relationships with Commissions to benefit from their knowledge and technical support, but many feel that they are not well informed about the work of Commissions or about how they might collaborate with them.

**Commission effectiveness is limited by the quality of relationships with the Secretariat**, due in particular to wanting clarity around expectations and a lack of supportive structures. Historically, a key function of the Secretariat has been to support the work of Commissions. Key stakeholders perceive that this situation has recently been reversed and that the role of Commissions is now inappropriately seen as providing resources (primarily knowledge) for the Secretariat to implement projects or formulate policy proposals. Most Commission Members interviewed felt that Commissions receive inadequate support.

**Structures for planning and reporting by Commissions** are not coherent or consistently used, which creates problems in terms of accountability, expectations and consequently relationships

between the Commissions and the Secretariat. The new Programme cycle provides an opportunity for Commissions to articulate and communicate their work within an inter-sessional plan, along with annual plans and reports, which describe the links to the 2017-2020 IUCN Programme. A range of tools are currently available, some of which may require adapting to the needs of Commissions and all of which may require Secretariat support to at least some Commissions.

### Efficiency of Commissions

**It is not possible to assess the efficiency of Commissions** with respect to returns on financial investment due to lack of planning and reporting systems and data. While there have been on-going efforts to put a value on volunteer contributions, these remain difficult to measure in terms of what to count and how to assign value and worth (e.g. specific functions, types of expertise, enhancing capacities vs. enhancing IUCN’s reputation and financial support).

**The process by which Commissions are mandated** and required to renew their mandates every four years is seen as a wasteful procedure. If Commissions were instead treated as permanent fixtures of IUCN (which better reflects the reality), Council could approve their strategic plans and related budgets – rather than re-approving a Commission’s mandate.

### IUCN Commissions – At a Glance

**The table below provides a partial and an at a glance perspective** on the assessment of Commissions as part of the 2015 External Review. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data from the study, and analysis undertaken and shared in the overall report, this table is an analytic translation of it all, reflecting the expert opinion of the External Review Team. This table should not be taken as a ‘scorecard’, but as guidance regarding the key areas of actual ‘contributions’ of the different Commissions and potential areas for further development. It recognises the fact that all Commissions are different, that they, like all organisations, go through life-cycles, and should not necessarily be compared with one another on all counts. Recommendations provided in this report are designed to address the different issues raised in the table. The scale used is the following: Very high, High, Moderate, Low, Virtually nonexistent. On the matter of efficiency, the table emphasises the lack of adequate financial reporting in evidence.

	SSC	WCPA	CEM	WCEL	CEESP	CEC
Alignment with Programme Framework	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high
Relevance of Thematic Focus	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high	High
Analytic, Scientific, Research	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high	Moderate
Knowledge Product Leadership	Very high	Very high	Very high	High	Very high	Moderate
Advisory Capacity	Very high	Very high	Very high	Moderate	High	Low
Innovation	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Very high	High
IUCN Programme Development	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high
One Programme Approach – Secretariat/HQ	Very high	Very high	Very high	Low	High	Moderate

	SSC	WCPA	CEM	WCEL	CEESP	CEC
One Programme Approach – Secretariat/RO	Overall untracked and under-exploited	Overall untracked and under-exploited	Overall untracked and under-exploited	Overall untracked and under-exploited	High	Overall untracked and under-exploited
One Programme Approach – Other Commissions	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high	Moderate
One Programme Approach – Institutional Members	Unclear	Unclear	Unclear	Unclear	Moderate	Low
Membership Engagement	Very high	Very high	Low	Low	High	Low
Stakeholder Engagement	Very high	Very high	Moderate	Moderate	Very high	Moderate
Communication	Very high	Very high	Moderate	Virtually nonexistent	High	Moderate
Strategic Planning	Very high	Very high	High	Low	High	Moderate
Planning and Reporting	Very high	Very high	Moderate	Virtually nonexistent	High	Low
Efficiency	Inadequate financial reporting	Inadequate financial reporting	Inadequate financial reporting	Inadequate financial reporting	Inadequate financial reporting	Inadequate financial reporting
Fundraising	Very high	Very high	Moderate	Virtually nonexistent	High	Low

### Concluding thoughts

**There is considerable variation in the Commissions**, their contributions to the Union, and how they are viewed by people associated with IUCN. Different ideas are in circulation about their role and functions, and the degree to which they should be aligned with the IUCN Programme (and even different ideas about what is meant by the ‘IUCN Programme’). This review has concluded that the Commissions remain an important asset within IUCN because they serve a range of knowledge-based functions and are also an important vehicle for engagement, which has yet to be fully exploited by IUCN. With respect to the thematic focus of the six Commissions, all are still considered relevant to the work of IUCN but there is variation, real and perceived, in how effectively they carry out their work. The table above provides a partial and an at a glance perspective on this variability.

**A Commission’s effectiveness** is a product of its structure and functioning as an individual unit and also its relationships with other parts of the Union. It is the challenges within these domains that most limit Commissions’ effectiveness, rather than lack of Programme alignment or inadequacy in terms of knowledge-based functions. Poor internal and external communication, for example, limits the impact of some Commissions, as does the lack of opportunities for meaningful engagement of their Members.

**Relationships among Commissions and other parts of the Union** still fall short of the One Programme vision. Collaboration with the Secretariat, which is vital for effective functioning of Commission, ranges from very satisfactory to fraught or virtually non-existent. When this relationship works well, it is attributed to complementarity of the individuals currently concerned rather than structures and tools that support trust, respect, and a shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved. This indicates an opportunity to fill a gap by



implementing mechanisms that facilitate constructive relationships and provide support for all Commissions to articulate, assess, enhance and communicate their work within the IUCN Programme Framework and as an integral part of the Union.

### **Fit for Purpose**

**Strengthening the Union.** Since the last External Review, IUCN has embarked on a series of initiatives to make changes intent on strengthening the Union (e.g. the Business Model and business lines, strategic papers on roles and responsibilities, key messages, strategies for policy influence, etc.). The One Programme Charter is largely emblematic of the widespread internal agreement that IUCN has needed a cultural shift in the direction of greater collaboration amongst its constituent parts. The One Programme Approach and the principles of the One Programme Charter are wholly aimed at leveraging the different parts of the Union in support of stronger delivery and impact of the IUCN Programme.

**While the IUCN Programme articulates a common set of goals and priorities** for the Union, it remains unmatched by collective actions to realise these. Indeed, the One Programme brings aspirational coherence to IUCN, without as yet effectively translating operationally and with consistency in terms of how the Union works together; to wit, *collective action* does not yet define the practice of the Union. The area most cited for improvement by Institutional Members was IUCN's need to refocus its strategic priorities by better aligning the national/regional and global levels of IUCN.

**On the whole, the External Review found a Union that remains fragmented.** Overcoming this problem in the many ways that it manifests will add significant value to IUCN's overall leadership role in the biodiversity conservation and sustainable development movements. The following matters warrant attention.

**Funding strategies and practices do not consistently support programme delivery** in ways that advance the One Programme. They tend not to make best use of all parts of the Union, nor do they exemplify the notion of the 'team best fit' for the task. This results in mistrust and competition between the Secretariat and Institutional Members.

**Regional and National Committees** are well-positioned to play convening and policy influencing roles in their respective locations. However, to link national, regional and global levels, they need to be better informed about IUCN's programmes while also contributing to them. While Committees are encouraged to align with IUCN's priorities, objectives and approaches, detailed mechanisms for coordination are not defined. There also need to be clearer and enforceable accountability mechanisms in place to favour greater coherence and alignment of Regional and National Committees with IUCN priorities, objectives and approaches.

**Both programmatic and mental siloing** have proven to be limiting factors on IUCN's effectiveness as well as its ability to report on its effectiveness. For example, despite the fact that the Global Water Programme and the Freshwater Biodiversity Unit share a concern with freshwater, there has seemingly been little communication or strategic or programmatic collaboration across these teams.

**Until very recently, IUCN had not updated its membership strategy in over 10 years.** For the time being, various important constituencies remain ineligible for membership. Important constituencies currently ineligible for membership include: Indigenous Peoples Organisations (IPOs), private sector actors, local and regional authorities and agencies, cities and youth. IUCN is currently revising both its membership categories and strategy, with notable consideration for IPOs and the private sector.

**IUCN's diverse membership is a recognised strength** for enacting its niche, notably supporting its role as a major convenor. Gains that IUCN receives from this membership are most evident when Members participate in various fora, programmes and collective actions to advance its objectives. Members value the networking and collective voice afforded them by IUCN membership.

**Yet, IUCN has not created an internal enabling environment** for various components of the Union to collectively and holistically address emerging global challenges. One of the critical threats to the cohesiveness of the Union is the paucity, variability and inconsistency of internal communication among all components. Overall, IUCN is not in the practice of socialising its knowledge across the Union.

**The global reach of IUCN is not appropriately supported by a communication system** that informs and engages over 1,200 Members in ways that add value to IUCN's influencing potential. The need to improve communication with Members was the second most frequently cited area for improvement in comments from surveyed Institutional Members. Further, surveyed Commission Members felt that Secretariat did not do enough to reach out to Members and Commissions. And materials in Spanish and French, in addition to those in English, are not sufficiently available to create a truly global organisation.

**External communications for IUCN is extremely important to its niche**, particularly for an organisation with a prominent convening role. The External Review found that IUCN's investment in external communications is not commensurate with its role as a convenor. According to all categories of stakeholders consulted, and in comparison with other global conservation NGOs, IUCN struggles to communicate its niche and brand. IUCN has a limited public profile in North America and Europe. IUCN has been ineffective at showcasing results on the ground and struggles to attract new donors who do not know IUCN.

**Perhaps most fundamentally, external communication remains fragmented across the Union.** IUCN does not have a current, integrated communications strategy for the entirety of the Union. The inclusive development of such a strategy would likely move the organisations towards addressing many of its persistent communications and branding challenges.

### **Human Resources Capacity**

**IUCN is making some human resource reforms** that are likely to contribute to better utilisation of expertise. It is undertaking a global skills audit to determine where better alignment of skills and positions is needed, and has recently implemented a performance appraisal system to ensure that managers link workplans to organisational results. It has also undertaken a restructuring with a view to cutting costs. It is not yet clear if the new structure will be more conducive to the execution of the One Programme.

### **Funding**

**IUCN's funding continuum** may be appreciable as going from Framework unrestricted funding at one end (and in decline), to project restricted funding at the other (which is small-scale project and implementation dependent), with programme restricted funding in the middle (an area for further development for IUCN).

**On the diversification of funding.** Today, IUCN leadership has articulated the expectation that ODA funding is decreasing and that unrestricted funds are expected to dwindle in the years to come, such that diversification of funding sources is imperative. An important aspect of the future of IUCN funding is likely to materialise in the form of programme restricted funding, varying from ODA Framework Partners, non-DAC countries, and also from foundations.

**IUCN can expect to collect modest Project Agency fees from GEF;** this is to cover administrative oversight without being an income source as such for IUCN. With IUCN as grant manager, GEF



Funding will likely result in increased resources available to IUCN Members for the execution of projects. Because of its involvement with GEF, IUCN is also well-positioned to play a similar role with other innovative funding mechanisms, while participating in key conversations shaping the next generation of instruments.

**Corporations accounted for only 4% of IUCN's budget in 2014.** IUCN has made modest through innovative progress in engaging the private sector more dynamically and meaningfully, intent on increasing this proportion. For instance, 20+ major companies participated in the World Parks Congress, notably through the Business and Biodiversity Pavilion. IUCN is also a founding member of the Natural Capital Coalition. Nonetheless, engaging with the private sector comes with risks that IUCN will need to examine and evaluate.

**As it revisits its funding strategy,** IUCN is pursuing possibilities for generating revenue from products and services (e.g. payment for services, such as IBAT, and offering the financial sector a means to assess natural capital risks that are dependent on biodiversity). Still, IUCN has not yet adopted a strong client orientation in its organisational culture, to adapt its products and services with revenue generation in mind.

**Overall, fundraising is a strategic exercise that requires planning for the future** with a capacity to implement multiple and diverse steps. As things stand, the Strategic Partnerships Unit of IUCN is playing a key role in strategizing the future of organisational funding, but it lacks the authority and capacity required to coordinate fundraising across IUCN.

### **M&E and Learning**

**IUCN's recent move to measure results according to its business lines** (reflecting strategic priorities) is an important step forward for its M&E system, but its investment in M&E and learning remains low. Less than 0.5% of IUCN's budget is allocated to PM&E Unit monitoring and evaluation activities. Typically, organisations allocate 1-5% of their budget for such activities, with as much as 10% allocated for the M&E of more experimental strategic work.

**IUCN's organisational culture and practices do not favour organisation-wide learning.** For such a large organisation (that is a community of communities), there are no facilitated virtual spaces or structured opportunities for developing communities of practice across the Union. There are a number of obstacles to IUCN's organisation-wide learning, most notably competition for resources, Global Programme driven learning, siloing between global programmes and between Commissions, and time and resources for regional reflection and learning. There are nonetheless important exceptions and sources of inspiration to be found across the Union in this respect.

### **Concluding thoughts**

**Various internal capabilities have been examined to assess IUCN's fit-for-purpose** for fulfilling its niche and roles. Results show that IUCN has made demonstrable efforts to define its niche and strengthen the Union through the One Programme approach, seeing notable strides with the Council-led FASU process.

**Progress has been made by Secretariat** towards aligning the different components of the Union as per the One Programme Charter. At the same time, it would be premature to say that IUCN is a collective action effectively working towards the realisation of its goals and objectives. A notable One Programme-related challenge facing IUCN derives from a persistent structural and programmatic siloing, a matter compounded by the often separate and parallel fundraising strategies and practices of Headquarters and Regional and Outposted Offices.

**The resourcing strategies of the Secretariat** for 'delivering results on the ground' have been known to result in competition over project funding with Institutional Members. Further, Regional Offices struggle to remain faithfully aligned with the One Programme in their programmatic work

because they rely on restricted, project funding as their principal source of income. The tensions between focus and funding, coupled with enduring communication issues between Headquarters, Regional Offices, Institutional Members and Commissions, have fuelled a measure of mistrust rather than the cooperation needed for greater coherence and alignment.

**Similar issues are visible in the relationships of Secretariat** with Regional and National Committees. While the Committees play an important convening role, they tend to be loosely connected to the rest of the Union, with no direct lines of accountability. As such, the One Programme remains more an ideal than a culture being practiced.

**IUCN is clearly aware of the need to update its membership strategy**, to give due consideration to expanding the membership mix (e.g. with respect to Indigenous Peoples Organisations), and decide how best to establish a relationship with the private sector. Further, IUCN's capacity to leverage bigger change lies in its global reach. But a 'collective voice' through alliance-building and collaboration across its membership is not yet commensurate with IUCN's potential as a global convenor. While IUCN endeavours to add value to the efforts of Members, IUCN's membership is clearly an important revenue base, with state Members contributing the most.

**IUCN's recent efforts to improve external communications**, address branding issues, explore strategic partnerships, and reform its human resource policies demonstrate awareness of the challenges to be tackled. The human resource reforms and GEF accreditation are still too recent to ascertain results, while the Strategic Partnerships Unit has concerted to initiate the groundwork to diversify its funding base, in light of declining trends in unrestricted ODA and Framework Partner funding. IUCN's pursuit of public-private partnerships, philanthropic funding, net worth individuals, amongst others is well-placed and requires yet more directed effort. The pursuit of client-oriented products and services holds much promise as well. Overcoming persistent obstacles and stepping up its efforts to improve results-based reporting and knowledge sharing across the Union would surely create greater coherence, in support of IUCN's funding, programmatic and overall strategic goals.

## Recommendations

The External Review Team has compiled a series of Strategic and Operational recommendations that speak to the issues covered in each section and by chapter. We believe these recommendations to be appropriate and important, and consider all Strategic Recommendations to be of relatively equal importance overall. However, and by way of guidance, we have annotated each of the Operational Recommendations according to *Strategic Priority*, *Urgency* and *Feasibility* on a scale of 1-3, where 1 is the highest.

All recommendations have been listed comprehensively below, as per the chapters to which they refer. Subsequently, in an effort to provide yet more strategic guidance, a table of the top 10 most important recommendations has been constructed.

## IUCN Role and Niche

### Strategic Recommendation 1 (Council, Senior Management)

(Linked to findings 1-6)

**1. IUCN should more explicitly bill itself as a trusted convenor, a platform uniquely able to create opportunities for bridging the perspectives of multi-sectoral and multi-level stakeholders who engage with the scientifically-informed knowledge it co-creates, for the purposes of influencing biodiversity conservation and sustainable development policy and practice.**

#### Operational Recommendations

- **1.1 IUCN should build its brand to further reflect its convenor role more explicitly.** It should thus revise its niche statement accordingly. (Senior Management, Global Communications Unit) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **1.2 IUCN should create and facilitate convening and consensus-building processes** to reflect, give visibility to, and leverage its Flagship Knowledge Products and Global Thematic Programme priorities and work. (Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **1.3 IUCN should further develop its capacity as a key communication channel** for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development communities' policy positions to be visibly articulated in appropriate venues. (Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Global Communications Unit, Commissions, Members) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 3, Feasibility 2*
- **1.4 IUCN should use its Observer Status at the UN more effectively**, with a more active and visible presence at all relevant conservation and sustainability meetings and processes. (Director General, IUCN Washington DC Office, Environmental Law Centre) – *Strategic Priority 3, Urgency 3, Feasibility 1*

**Strategic Recommendation 2 (Council, Senior Management, Business and Biodiversity Group, Members)**

(Linked to findings 3-5)

**2. IUCN should revise its private sector engagement strategy to be both strategic and opportunistic.**

**Operational Recommendations**

- **2.1 IUCN should develop an updated private sector engagement strategy** dually aimed at those that explicitly position themselves as champions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and others that continue to have highly adverse biodiversity conservation and sustainable development impacts. (Business and Biodiversity Group, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **2.2 IUCN should leverage its involvement in ‘technical advisory panels’** to further engage with private sector actors and draw them into thematically appropriate, IUCN-facilitated convening and consensus-building processes. (Business and Biodiversity Group, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **2.3 IUCN should seek strategic opportunities to meet with industry representatives** at high-level forums and within networks that convene private sector actors around global environmental challenges. (Business and Biodiversity Group, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 1*

**Knowledge Products and Knowledge Chains**

**Strategic Recommendation 3 (Council, Senior Management, Commission Chairs, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors)**

(Linked to findings 7-11, 13-14)

**3. IUCN must ensure and protect the quality, consistency and branding of *Flagship Knowledge Products* that mobilise IUCN standards.**

**Operational Recommendations**

- **3.1 IUCN should prioritise, leverage, mobilise and give visibility to all Flagship Knowledge Products** that mobilise IUCN standards equally, though not necessarily similarly. (Commission Chairs, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **3.2 Flagship Knowledge Products should be developed, positioned and branded** as responding to both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development priorities, objectives and needs (Council, Senior Management, Commission Chairs, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Partners) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **3.3 Flagship Knowledge Products should be based on IUCN-approved standards** before being recognised and labelled as such, and to ensure the quality of derivative sub-products. (Council, Senior Management, Commission Chairs, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Partners) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 1*

- **3.4 Matters of quality, data coverage and deficiency of the Flagship Knowledge Products** merit concerted attention, given the centrality of this work to IUCN as a whole. More numerous and more intentional partnerships with universities across the world should be pursued to address this matter. (Senior Management, Commission Chairs, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Partners) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **3.5 IUCN is encouraged to continue developing processes, mechanisms and protocols for incorporating indigenous knowledge** in all Flagship Knowledge Products, and should encourage the development of appropriate partnerships with CEESP, other relevant Commissions as well as organisational and institutional relationships to this effect. (Commissions Chairs, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Partners) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **3.6 A revised funding strategy for Flagship Knowledge Products is warranted**, in concert with the overall revision in IUCN’s funding strategy. (Council, Senior Management, Commission Chairs, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Partners) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*

**Strategic Recommendation 4 (Council, Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors)**

(Linked to findings 7-9, 12, 14)

**4. IUCN must ensure and protect the quality, consistency and branding of its *programme-based knowledge products*.**

**Operational Recommendations**

- **4.1 IUCN programme-based knowledge products should be developed, positioned and branded** as responding to both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development priorities, objectives and needs. (Council, Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Partners) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **4.2 Towards favouring the quality of its programme-based knowledge products, at least one Commission should formally be involved** in their development, production, deployment and/or use, where it has relevant expertise. (Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commission Chairs) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 1*
- **4.3 IUCN is encouraged to continue developing processes, mechanisms and protocols for incorporating indigenous knowledge** in programme-based knowledge products, and should encourage the development of appropriate partnerships with CEESP, other relevant Commissions as well as organisational and institutional relationships to this effect. (Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions Chairs, Partners) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **4.4 Programme-based knowledge products across the Union should be subject to a peer review process**, inclusive of internal and external actors to IUCN, to ensure IUCN branded product quality. (Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 1*

**Strategic Recommendation 5 (Council, Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members)**  
(Linked to findings 15-21)

**5. IUCN should be strategic and intentional about mobilising its Flagship and programme-based knowledge products along clearly articulated and monitored outcome pathways.**

**Operational Recommendations**

- **5.1 IUCN is encouraged to pursue a knowledge chain analysis for each of its Flagship Knowledge Products**, intent on making visible each of their individual and complementary outcome pathways. (Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **5.2 IUCN is encouraged to pursue a knowledge chain analysis for a strategic selection of programme-based knowledge products**, intent on making visible each of their individual and complementary outcome pathways. (Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **5.3 IUCN should develop a policy-oriented outcome strategy for its knowledge-based work**, drawing and building upon the knowledge-policy interface and influencing approach underpinning the IPBES Platform, anchored in knowledge generation, assessments, policy support tools and capacity-building. (Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **5.4 IUCN should develop reporting and monitoring mechanisms designed to track outcomes** along each of the pathways for all Flagship Knowledge Products and a strategic sample of programme-based knowledge products. (PM&E Unit, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **5.5 IUCN should more intentionally leverage Flagship Knowledge Products and programme-based knowledge products to continue influencing and informing policy** processes and mechanisms, at global, regional and national levels, notably through convening processes and by enacting the One Programme Approach. (Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 1*
- **5.6 IUCN should more intentionally leverage Flagship Knowledge Products and programme-based knowledge products to influence action and practice** multi-sectorally and at multiple societal levels, drawing on the outstanding strategic work, relationships and practices of the Global Water Programme and others across the Union. (Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **5.7 IUCN should continue cultivating its brand, leveraging its knowledge products, and seeking opportunities to influence and manage financial resources allocations** in the field of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. (Strategic Partnerships Unit, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **5.8 IUCN should learn from, and build upon the 'IBAT Model'**, and further tailor Flagship Knowledge Product and where appropriate programme-based knowledge product knowledge product development and management with specific end-users' needs in mind, articulating intended use, policy influence, as well as implications for action and practice. (Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commission Chairs, IBAT Staff) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*



- **5.9 IUCN should continue informing and further influencing research agendas** by ensuring its work is accessible to the research community and also by building research-based alliances with academic, NGO, government and private sector entities. A thorough analysis of the use of Flagship and programme-based knowledge products in the peer review literature would be a necessary first step. (Global Programme Directors, Commission Chairs) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 1*
- **5.10 Intent on expanding the community of Flagship and programme-based knowledge product users**, IUCN should strategically and selectively develop popular applications, diverse licensing agreements and partnerships to imagine, create and finance how to move this forward. (Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commission Chairs, Members) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **5.11 IUCN should ensure that Flagship and programme-based knowledge products are available in all of IUCN's three official languages.** (Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commission Chairs, Members) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*

**Strategic Recommendation 6 (Council, Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members)**  
(Linked to findings 22-24)

## **6. IUCN should further pursue the coherence and effectiveness of its knowledge products governance and management structures and practices.**

### **Operational Recommendations**

- **6.1 IUCN's knowledge nomenclature should be finalised and publicised** across the Union within a reasonable timeframe, so this updated understanding of concepts and terms may appropriately inform development of the knowledge components of IUCN's next quadrennial Programme. (Council, Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 1*
- **6.2 Horizontal integration of all Flagship Knowledge Products should continue**, as has been prioritised by IUCN, ensuring complementarities between them. (Council, Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **6.3 Vertical integration of knowledge products should be pursued** in planned and coherent ways, building 'baskets of knowledge' through links that are intentionally made between products across the Union (as in the case of Protected Planet), through the creation of integrative knowledge tools (e.g. IBAT), and through monitoring and reporting mechanisms. (Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Programme Directors, Commissions, PM&E Unit) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **6.4 IUCN should develop a funding strategy that is built around its development of 'baskets of knowledge'.** (Senior Management, Strategic Partnership Unit, Commission Chairs, Global Programme Directors) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **6.5 IUCN should ensure that development of the Natural Resources Governance Framework** (and all new Flagship Knowledge Products) is provided with appropriate guidance, support and oversight. (Council, Senior Management, Commission Chairs, Global Programme Directors) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 1*

## IUCN Commissions

### Strategic Recommendation 7 (Council, Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commission Chairs)

(Linked to findings 25-26, 28, 29)

#### 7. Serving multiple functions, the six existing Commissions should be maintained.

##### Operational Recommendations

- **7.1 Commissions should provide multiple forums and platforms** for information sharing and strategic development among their Members and with other parts of IUCN. (Commissions, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **7.2 Commissions should further integrate new issues and thematic areas as they arise**, notably through joint initiatives involving more than one Commission. A review and renewal of Commission Task Forces, Specialist Groups and other sub-groups is merited. (Commissions, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **7.3 At a minimum, Commissions should align with the IUCN Programme Framework** and choose whether and how to align with Programme results. (Commissions, Council, Senior Management) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 1*
- **7.4 IUCN should replace the statement about Commissions currently on the website** with a new one based on the One Programme statement, which uses simple and evocative language. The broad role of Commissions as both expert and membership networks should also be emphasised in all IUCN communication materials. (Commissions, Global Communications Unit) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 1*

### Strategic Recommendation 8 (Council, Commission Chairs, Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors)

(Linked to findings 27, 30-32)

#### 8. IUCN should clarify its position on a series of structural matters related to Commissions, notably on their size, matters of communication and membership.

##### Operational Recommendations

- **8.1 The growing size of Commissions should not be discouraged** – each Commission should grow according to its needs and the level of interest of potential Members. Commissions must ensure that their size does not hinder the active participation of their Members. (Commission Chairs, Council) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 1*
- **8.2 Commission Chairs and Steering Committees should develop a plan to recruit, integrate and meaningfully engage new Members** in ways that reflects and appropriately expands the diversity of scientific, social and political perspectives present within a Commission, engaging a new generation of actors. Attention must consistently be given to gender balance and regional representation. (Commission Chairs, Global Gender Office, Regional Directors) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*



- **8.3 Commissions should put in place the structures and mechanisms to ensure that there is regular communication among all Members** and opportunities for everyone to play an active role, e.g. encouraging all Members to join or create Specialist Groups. Steering Committees should communicate their work and make sure that opportunities for engagement and communication are available to the broader membership. (Commissions) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **8.4 Commissions need to clearly define and communicate what they are doing** (as well as what they will do and have done), how it links to the IUCN Programme, and what sort of relationship they expect with Secretariat. They can then be judged by compliance with agreed upon terms and their own plans. (Commission Chairs, Senior Management, Global Communications Unit) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **8.5 IUCN Commissions should review and revise the materials they have posted on their websites**, to ensure they all meet and ideally surpass the basic minimum of information required. (Commissions, Global Communications Unit) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 1*
- **8.6 IUCN should implement a standard process for becoming a Commission Member**, with additional specific criteria or procedures as required for different Commissions, to be managed using an online system. A single entry point for applying to join a Commission should be on the Commissions page of the IUCN website. This page should provide information about the specific procedure and requirements for joining each Commission. An online application process should be developed, requiring both general information and specific information to be forward to the Commission in question. (Global Communications Unit, Commissions, Senior Management) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*

#### **Strategic Recommendation 9 (Council, Commission Chairs, Senior Management)**

(Linked to findings 33-34)

**9. The role of Commission Chair should be recognised as a full time job. Appropriate support should be provided to Commission Chairs for the effective management of IUCN Commissions.**

##### **Operational Recommendations**

- **9.1 IUCN should allocate resources to either support the Chair** to work full-time or provide full-time staff support to the role. (Council, Commission Chairs, Senior Management) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **9.2 Institutional structures need to be put in place to ensure that appropriate Chairs are selected**, supported and able to deliver the accountability for which they are responsible. (Council, Commission Chairs, Senior Management) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **9.3 Given the importance of the role of Commission Chair, it would be appropriate to have a detailed job specification** and a matrix for assessing candidates running for election, more akin to a senior management position. (Council, Commission Chairs) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **9.4 It would similarly be appropriate to assemble a nominating committee** for the election of Commission Chairs, combining the perspectives of different parts of the Union given that the effectiveness of a Commission is strongly linked to relationships with the rest of the Union, many of which are mediated by the Chair. (Council, Commission Chairs, Senior Management) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*

- **9.5 Commissions Chairs should be provided with appropriate orientation** (training, advice and documentation) to support them in effectively performing their roles. The following documents and processes should be developed overall for Commissions: (1) a manual and training for Commission Chairs and Deputy Chairs, including guidance for establishing a Steering Committee; (2) a manual for Steering Committee Members, and ideally sub-groups and a handbook for new Commission Members (these can be based on existing SSC and WCPA documents). (Council, Commission Chairs, Senior Management) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*

**Strategic Recommendation 10 (Council, Commission Chairs, Senior Management)**

(Linked to findings 35-41)

**10. IUCN should ensure that relations between Commissions and other parts of the Union are conducive to their effectiveness and to that of the Union as a whole.**

**Operational Recommendations**

- **10.1 Joint Task Forces, Specialist Groups and other sub-groups should be encouraged**, supported and given greater visibility across the Union. (Council, Commission Chairs, Global Communications Unit) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 1*
- **10.2 A newsletter specifically of Commission activities should be developed** and shared with all Institutional Members on a biannual basis. (Commission Chairs, Global Communications Unit, Strategic Partnerships Unit) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 1*
- **10.3 The basic meaning of the concept of ‘reasonable support’ to be provided by Secretariat for Commissions must be clarified** and revised every four years, as part of quadrennial Programme development. (Council, Senior Management, Commission Chairs) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **10.4 A protocol for relationships between Commission and Secretariat should be established collaboratively** at the start of every new Programme cycle, and reviewed and adjusted annually. A protocol document (including the programme, plan, roles, budget, etc) to which both parties adhere would lay out the parameters that govern the relationship and articulate expectations on both sides. It could also detail roles and responsibilities around particular activities and projects. (Commission Chairs, Senior Management, Council) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **10.5 A review should be undertaken of the arrangements for focal point and administrative support within the Secretariat for each Commission.** Arrangements that maximise effectiveness and efficiency should be identified and adjustments made when required. Focal points within the Secretariat at a strategic level are recommended. (Council, Commission Chairs, Senior Management) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **10.6 A coherent and consistently used system of planning and reporting for Commissions should be developed and implemented** that involves collaboration between Commissions and Secretariat to establish an agreed upon framework. A host of existing documents, tools and mechanisms can be drawn upon for this (e.g. ‘Project Guidelines and Standards for Project Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation’) or developed as needed, where gaps have been identified on all aspects of leadership and performance (e.g. joint fundraising targets). (Commission Chairs, Senior Management, Council) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*

- **10.7 IUCN should consider a major statutory change, which would see the end of Commissions seeking approval from Congress for their mandates** and replaced with approval of their strategic, operational and financial plans for the coming four years. This would shift energy toward a strategic exercise and away from one that is essentially bureaucratic and also sustains an unhelpful discourse about questioning the Commission's existence rather than its work. Doing so would surely entail a significant cost-savings that could instead be used to support Commission Chairs. (Council, Commission Chairs) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 3*

## Fit for Purpose of IUCN

### Strategic Recommendation 11 (Council, Commission Chairs, Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Members)

(Linked to findings 42-46)

**11. IUCN should continue undertaking initiatives intent on strengthening the Union, as per the One Programme Charter.**

#### Operational Recommendations

- **11.1 In conceptualising the 2017-2020 Programme, its programmatic work and the development of Flagship and programme-based knowledge products, IUCN should ensure that the One Programme approach is encouraged in meeting programmatic priorities.** (Secretariat, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commission Chairs) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **11.2 IUCN must actively construct teams 'best fit' for delivering the Programme.** Every thematic and regional programme should operationally map and plan their One Programme engagement, including working with Commissions and implementing partnerships. (Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commission Chairs, Members) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **11.3 A strategic alignment should be pursued in fundraising strategies and choices** between Regional Offices and Headquarters, so that all efforts to secure project funds support and contribute to the One Programme. (Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **11.4 IUCN's Regional and National Committees should be better informed about IUCN's programmes while also contributing to them.** Although the One Programme is not binding for Committees, they should still be held accountable to the One Programme Charter's principles, one of which is to 'cooperate and not compete.' A set of guidelines should be developed and endorsed by Council to more clearly establish the conditions upon which Committees operate. (Global Programme Director, Regional Directors, Regional and National Committee Chairs, Council) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **11.5 To foster an organisational learning culture, IUCN leadership needs to follow through on the aspirations of the One Programme Charter,** encouraging and motivating behaviours that break down silos. Different Commissions, programmes and units across the Union should develop and mobilise knowledge products, sub-products and ensuring programmatic work collaboratively, also fundraising and reporting together if and as appropriate. (Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commission Chairs, PM&E Unit) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*

**Strategic Recommendation 12 (Council, Senior Management Team, Commission Chairs, Governance and Constituency Committee)**

(Linked to findings 47-48)

**12. IUCN should continue updating its membership strategy, to ensure it has the right membership size and mix for effectively delivering its 2017-2020 Programme and in alignment with its niche.**

**Operational Recommendations**

- **12.1 IUCN should conclude its deliberation on new Membership categories** ahead of the 2016 WCC, notably with respect to Indigenous Peoples Organisations (IPOs) and the Private Sector. The External Review Team recommends the creation of a new, voting, membership category for IPOs. It also recommends that consideration be given to a non-voting observer status membership for private sector actors. (Council, Governance and Constituency Committee) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 1*
- **12.2 IUCN membership strategy should include a clear articulation of the value proposition for Members**, and of the rights but also obligations of Members, given that the latter remains unspecified. (Senior Management Team, Senior Governance and Constituency Team) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 3, Feasibility 1*

**Strategic Recommendation 13 (Global Communications Unit, Senior Management Team, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commission Chairs, Strategic Partnerships Unit)**

(Linked to findings 49-51)

**13. IUCN should more intentionally socialise its knowledge across the Union, creating an enabling communicative environment for different components of the Union to collectively and holistically work together.**

**Operational Recommendations**

- **13.1 The Global Communications Unit should develop a whole of organisation communication strategy**, doing so in ways that actively engage all relevant communications actors across the Union, and then making it available across the Union in a timely fashion. (Global Communication Unit, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commission Chairs) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **13.2 The Global Communications Unit should work in more concerted and coordination fashion** with the communication approaches undertaken in Thematic Global Programmes and Regional Offices. (Global Communication Unit, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **13.3 A protocol should be developed to provide guidance on communication practices** between Commissions and Regional Offices. (Commission Chairs, Regional Offices) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **13.4 IUCN should develop more effective communication materials** (such as Wetlands strategic intent document<sup>2</sup>) to explain the work that IUCN does clearly and with appeal to specific audiences, notably to support Councillors in conducting strategic outreach. (Global Communications Unit, Council) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **13.5 IUCN should develop a mechanism for communicating regularly and effectively with its different Member constituencies**, to counter the general distance experienced by the majority of Members. (Global Communications Unit) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*

- **13.6 IUCN should compile an accurate description of how Commissions operate** and make this available in the Commissions section of the IUCN website. Commissions and Secretariat should provide links to this information in key documents where Commissions are mentioned. (Global Communications Unit, Commission Chairs) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 1*
- **13.7 A regular newsletter should be developed and circulated** across the Union and strategically outside it, featuring campaigns and strategies, Commissions, Programmatic highlights, Member highlights, knowledge product information, and biodiversity conservation and sustainable development outcomes and successes in which IUCN has participated. (Global Communications Unit) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **13.8 IUCN should finally resolve its branding issues** pertaining to the use of IUCN logos. (Global Communications Unit, Global Programme Directors, Commission Chairs) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 1*
- **13.9 IUCN should endeavour to make its public materials (e.g. website) equally available in all IUCN official languages.** At the moment, much basic but important text is only available in English. (Global Communications Unit) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*

**Strategic Recommendation 14 (Human Resources Unit, Senior Management Team)**

(Linked to finding 52)

**14. IUCN should continue pursuing its human resources reforms, towards ensuring a better utilisation of its vast expertise.**

**Operational Recommendation**

- **14.1 IUCN should be prepared to respond to insights and recommendations emerging from the global skills audit underway,** slated for completion in Spring 2016. (Human Resources Unit) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*

**Strategic Recommendation 15 (Senior Management Team, Strategic Partnerships Unit, Framework Partners, Commission Chairs, Council)**

(Linked to findings 53-54)

**15. IUCN should continue revising its funding strategy to account for the current downward trend in unrestricted ODA funding and the emergence of interesting alternatives.**

**Operational Recommendations**

- **15.1 The Strategic Partnership Unit should have the authority and capacity to coordinate fundraising across the Union.** (Council, Senior Management Team, Strategic Partnership Unit) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 1*
- **15.2 IUCN should develop fundraising packages for specific potential donors,** which brings together an *appropriately designed and tailored* mix of knowledge products, programmes, Commissions, regional and other considerations. (Strategic Partnership Unit, in conversation across the Union) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **15.3 While diversifying its' funding strategically, IUCN should focus on securing programme restricted funding.** This will involve investing human and financial resources in relationship-building with potential Framework Partners, as well as branding and marketing IUCN, in ways that respond to their specific interests and priorities. (Council, Senior Management team, Strategic Partnership Unit, Framework Partners) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*



- **15.4 IUCN should seek out a non-DAC donor for programme restricted funding in the next quadrennial period**, accounting for the rising development, humanitarian and South-South cooperation funding coming from China, India, Brazil, Saudi Arabia and South Africa in particular. (Council, Senior Management team, Strategic Partnership Unit, Framework Partners) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 3*
- **15.5 IUCN should actively target and build relationships with foundations** as potential donors for programme restricted funding into the forthcoming quadrennial period. (Senior Management Team, Strategic Partnerships Unit, Commission Chairs) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 3*
- **15.6 IUCN should solidify its position as a conservation and sustainability financial resource manager and grantmaker**, through its involvement with GEF. It should subsequently consider expanding its role and capacities in this respect, towards eventually seeking project agency status with the Green Climate Fund and others. (Senior Management Team, Strategic Partnership Unit, GEF Unit) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **15.7 IUCN should develop a strategy for reaching out to high net worth individuals**. (Council, Senior Management team, Strategic Partnerships Unit) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **15.8 IUCN should continue seeking project-based funding** (including funding that is aligned with its Global Thematic Programmes), while desisting from pursuing project funding that is likely to put it in competition with its own Members. (Strategic Partnership Unit, Global Program Directors, Regional Directors) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 1*
- **15.9 Secretariat and Commissions should align and design their fundraising strategies** so that they avoid overlaps, take advantage of their respective strengths, are properly supported, report on their activities, and continue to enact the One Programme approach to the benefit of both. (Senior Management Team, Strategic Partnerships Unit, Commission Chairs) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 1*
- **15.10 IUCN should develop a stronger client orientation across all of its work**. It should consider doing so by selling knowledge packages and services based on existing Flagship and programme-based knowledge products, selling capacity-building services, and in other innovative ways to be developed. It should also consider developing strategic partnerships with public institutions and private sector actors for these purposes. (Senior Management Team, Global Programme Directors, Commission Chairs, IBAT Staff) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*

#### **Strategic Recommendation 16 (Senior Management Team, PM&E Unit)**

(Linked to findings 55-57)

**16. IUCN should continue revising its M&E system, in line with both the strategic-orientation and learning prerogative of Results-Based Management (RBM) approach to Monitoring and Evaluation.**

#### **Operational Recommendations**

- **16.1 IUCN should continue taking steps to link its strategic and programmatic M&E approaches**, so that it can more clearly articulate both its activities and its contributions to biodiversity and sustainability outcomes. (PM&E Unit, Global Programme Directors) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*

- **16.2 IUCN should develop its PM&E approach and practices to more intentionally value and pursue learning across the Union.** (PM&E Unit, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commission Chairs) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **16.3 IUCN should develop appropriately collaborative monitoring processes** specifically designed to generate hard as well as perceptual data on the effectiveness of Flagship and selected programme-based knowledge products as well as Commissions. (PM&E Unit, Commission Chairs, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2*
- **16.4 IUCN should develop mechanisms for increasing the participation of Members in M&E activities.** They have valuable experience and insights about IUCN’s work that is not adequately being captured. Also, data generated through M&E practices could be targeted to the specific end-uses of Members, in ways that could be beneficial to the Union. (PM&E Unit) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2*
- **16.5 IUCN should intentionally build experience-sharing and dialogical learning processes** into mid-term and/or end-term programmatic cycles, drawing on the experiences of the Global Water Programme, in ways that also contribute to reporting and accountability. (PM&E Unit, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors) – *Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 1*
- **16.6 IUCN should consider increasing its M&E budget** so that it is more in line with comparable organisations and the industry standard, were resources to become available for such purposes. (Senior Management team, PM&E Unit) – *Strategic Priority 2, Urgency 2, Feasibility 3*

## The Top 10 Recommendations

Exhibit 1.1 Top 10 Recommendations

Evaluation Areas	Strategic		Operational		
	Recommendation	Target Audience	Recommendation	Target Audience	Priority Level
IUCN Role and Niche	<b>1. IUCN should more explicitly bill itself as a trusted convener</b> , a platform uniquely able to create opportunities for bridging the perspectives of multi-sectoral and multi-level stakeholders who engage with the scientifically-informed knowledge it co-creates, for the purposes of influencing biodiversity conservation and sustainable development policy and practice.	Council, Senior Management	<b>1.1 IUCN should build its brand to further reflect its convener role more explicitly.</b> It should thus revise its niche statement accordingly.	Senior Management, Global Communications Unit	Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2
Knowledge Products and Knowledge Chains	<b>3. IUCN must ensure and protect the quality, consistency and branding of <i>Flagship Knowledge Products</i> that mobilise IUCN standards.</b>	Council, Senior Management, Commission Chairs, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors	<b>3.1 IUCN should prioritise, leverage, mobilise and give visibility to all <i>Flagship Knowledge Products</i> that mobilise IUCN standards equally, though not necessarily similarly.</b>	Commission Chairs, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors	Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2
	<b>4. IUCN must ensure and protect the quality, consistency and branding of its <i>programme-based knowledge products</i>.</b>	Council, Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors	<b>4.2 Towards favouring the quality of its programme-based knowledge products, at least one Commission should formally be involved</b> in their development, production, deployment and/or use, where it has relevant expertise.	Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors	Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 1



Evaluation Areas	Strategic		Operational		
	Recommendation	Target Audience	Recommendation	Target Audience	Priority Level
	<b>5. IUCN should be strategic and intentional about mobilising its Flagship and programme-based knowledge products along clearly articulated and monitored outcome pathways.</b>	Council, Senior Management, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commissions, Members	<b>5.8 IUCN should learn from, and build upon the 'IBAT Model'</b> , and further tailor Flagship Knowledge Product and where appropriate programme-based knowledge product development and management with specific end-users' needs in mind, articulating intended use, policy influence, as well as implications for action and practice.	Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commission Chairs, IBAT Staff	Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2
IUCN Commissions	<b>9. The role of Commission Chair should be recognised as a full time job. Appropriate support should be provided to Commission Chairs for the effective management of IUCN Commissions.</b>	Council, Commission Chairs, Senior Management	<b>9.5 Commissions Chairs should be provided with appropriate orientation</b> (training, advice and documentation) to support them in effectively performing their roles. The following documents and processes should be developed overall for Commissions: (1) a manual and training for Commission Chairs and Deputy Chairs, including guidance for establishing a Steering Committee; (2) a manual for Steering Committee Members, and ideally sub-groups and a handbook for new Commission Members (these can be based on existing SSC and WCPA documents).	Council, Commission Chairs, Senior Management	Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 2, Feasibility 2

Evaluation Areas	Strategic		Operational		
	Recommendation	Target Audience	Recommendation	Target Audience	Priority Level
	<b>10. IUCN should ensure that relations between Commissions and other parts of the Union are conducive to their effectiveness and to that of the Union as a whole.</b>	Council, Commission Chairs, Senior Management	<b>10.3 The basic meaning of the concept of ‘reasonable support’ to be provided by Secretariat for Commissions must be clarified</b> and revised every four years, as part of quadrennial Programme development.	Council, Senior Management, Commission Chairs	Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2
Fit for Purpose of IUCN	<b>13. IUCN should more intentionally socialise its knowledge across the Union, creating an enabling communicative environment for different components of the Union to collectively and holistically work together.</b>	Global Communications Unit, Senior Management Team, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commission Chairs, Strategic Partnerships Unit	<b>13.1 The Global Communications Unit should develop a whole of organisation communication strategy</b> , doing so in ways that actively engage all relevant communications actors across the Union, and then making it available across the Union in a timely fashion.	Global Communication Unit, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors, Commission Chairs	Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2
	<b>15. IUCN should continue revising its funding strategy to account for the current downward trend in unrestricted ODA funding and the emergence of interesting alternatives.</b>	Senior Management Team, Strategic Partnerships Unit, Framework Partners, Commission Chairs, Council	<b>15.1 The Strategic Partnership Unit should have the authority and capacity to coordinate fundraising across the Union.</b>	Council, Senior Management Team, Strategic Partnership Unit	Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 1
			<b>15.2 IUCN should develop fundraising packages for specific potential donors</b> , which brings together an <i>appropriately designed</i> and <i>tailored</i> mix of knowledge products and baskets, programmes, Commissions, regional and other considerations.	Strategic Partnership Unit, in conversation across the Union	Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2

Evaluation Areas	Strategic		Operational		
	Recommendation	Target Audience	Recommendation	Target Audience	Priority Level
	<p><b>16. IUCN should continue revising its M&amp;E system, in line with both the strategic-orientation and learning prerogative of Results-Based Management (RBM) approach to Monitoring and Evaluation.</b></p>	<p>Senior Management Team, PM&amp;E Unit</p>	<p><b>16.3 IUCN should develop appropriately collaborative monitoring processes</b> specifically designed to generate hard as well as perceptual data on the effectiveness of Flagship and selected programme-based knowledge products as well as Commissions.</p>	<p>PM&amp;E Unit, Commission Chairs, Global Programme Directors, Regional Directors</p>	<p>Strategic Priority 1, Urgency 1, Feasibility 2</p>



## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> IUCN. (2012a). 'IUCN Knowledge Products: The basis for a partnership to support the functions and work programme of IPBES'. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. p.6.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.wetlands.org/Portals/0/publications/Strategy%20paper/WI-SI2011\\_2020-web.pdf](http://www.wetlands.org/Portals/0/publications/Strategy%20paper/WI-SI2011_2020-web.pdf)  
(Consulted 6 January 2016).