



IUCN and the Slovakian Presidency of the Council of the EU

Meeting Report Outcomes of the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2016 - what do they mean for Europe?

7 November 2016

Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU,
Brussels



Photo credit: Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU.

In collaboration with the European Parliament Intergroup on “Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development”



Our planet is at a crossroads - the decisions we make today will set us down a path that will define humanity's opportunities and the boundaries of those opportunities for generations to come. To discuss and agree on the way forward to overcome these challenges, over 10,000 leaders from government, civil society, indigenous communities, faith and spiritual traditions, the private sector, and academia gathered for the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2016 in Hawai'i, from the 1st to the 10th of September, 2016. The World Conservation Congress is organised every four years by IUCN, and over the past decades has helped to shape the foundation for key international conservation processes and treaties, such as CITES, Ramsar, World Heritage and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

European and global leaders met in Brussels on 7 November 2016 to discuss how the EU can benefit from the momentum generated in Hawai'i to examine nature -based, life -affirming solutions and the roles that governments, civil society and the private sector can have in the development and delivery of the outcomes of the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2016. The event was co-organised by IUCN and the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The main goal of this event was to inform IUCN Members, partners and EU decision makers, and Members of the European Parliament about the key outcomes of the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2016 and to discuss how they can support environmental policy and action in Europe. Resolutions from the IUCN Congress 2016 such as on "IUCN Biodiversity Offsets Policy"; "Defining Nature-based Solutions", "Reinforcement of the principle of no-regression", or "Natural Capital" as well as initiatives such as the Honolulu Challenge or the Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership¹ have been identified as support for current relevant EU debates. The IUCN European Work Programme 2017-2020 will ensure the strategic focus of IUCN's work in Europe building on these resolutions and initiatives to achieve the European conservation goals.

This event was also an opportunity to indicate how the outcomes of the IUCN Congress 2016 feed into the upcoming Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of the Parties in Cancún, Mexico, the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) and the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

Welcome address

Norbert Kurilla, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, current EU Presidency of the Council of the European Union

State Secretary, Norbert Kurilla opened the session expressing a desire to use the inspiration and outcomes from the IUCN Congress 2016 to focus on concrete actions that the European Union can take to help nature, biodiversity and landscape protection, while at the same time create opportunities to ensure sustainable economic development. "One cannot be solved without the other and we should always keep this in mind."



Norbert Kurilla, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, current EU Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Photo credit: Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU.

¹More detailed information found in the background paper [here](#).

Keynote speeches

Inger Andersen, Director General of IUCN

Inger Andersen presented some of the highlights of IUCN Congress 2016 and what made it such an unprecedented event. She emphasised the desire to continue to build on the strong partnership between the European Commission and IUCN. IUCN tools like the Red List provide essential knowledge on the status of species in Europe and IUCN priorities such as Nature-Based Solutions are now central to Horizon 2020. At the same time, the European Commission and IUCN are strongly upholding the biodiversity programme for the EU outermost regions and overseas countries and territories as well as in developing countries through BIOPAMA. IUCN's policy on Biodiversity Offsets, the Key Biodiversity Areas standard, and the Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas are also important elements for achieving the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020. Ms Andersen added, "we want to continue to be the organisation that brings together the power of its members to provide relevant, timely, science-based knowledge for sustainable development."

Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, European Commission

The Commissioner recognised the success the IUCN Congress 2016 had in refocusing the world's attention on the importance of biodiversity. He noted that the European Commission has already made progress in addressing some of the challenges raised in Hawai'i. The Commissioner pointed out that identifying the economic benefits of biodiversity conservation is fundamental to reach the 2020 EU Biodiversity Strategy. He also commended the commitment of IUCN Members to promote conservation not only on public but also on private land. Many areas in the EU are privately owned, therefore good management of species and habitats in such areas requires close cooperation with private actors. He highlighted the alignment between IUCN's work and the European Commission's priorities, mentioning three areas of current focus: ocean conservation (focusing on limiting human presence in the ocean, on the legal framework, and on strengthening knowledge), the ongoing work on invasive alien species and the recognition of the economic benefits of biodiversity and its conservation.



Luc Bas, Director, IUCN European Regional Office (left) and Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, European Commission (right). **Photo credit:** Els Martens.

Panel debate

Panellists reflected on the IUCN Congress 2016 and outlined their views on the key issues that could be of particular support for the European conservation agenda.

Dr. Hilde Eggermont, IUCN European Regional IUCN Councillor

Hilde Eggermont highlighted that the outcomes of the IUCN Congress 2016 are strongly aligned with the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and they will increase the synergies between environmental conventions and agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, Ramsar and CITES. The IUCN Global Programme 2017-2020, which was agreed in Hawai'i, is tailored to specific targets and many are very important for Europe. She also mentioned a number of Resolutions and Recommendations agreed in Hawai'i relevant for Europe (some examples can be found in the background document for this event [here](#)), and welcomed the further definition of the Nature-Based Solutions concept, and how they can be used as a tool to incorporate biodiversity considerations into business practices. She also noted the set-up of a global platform allowing for exchange of best practice between IUCN National and Regional Committees. Finally, Dr Eggermont recognised the effort made at the IUCN Congress 2016 to reconnect people with nature for example, through the [#Nature4All](#) initiative, and inspire new generations to engage with nature to ensure the success of future conservation action.

Angelo Caserta, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, Birdlife Europe

Angelo Caserta noted that the Key Biodiversity Areas partnership, launched at the IUCN Congress 2016 will be particularly relevant for the EU agenda due to its overlap with Natura 2000. He also addressed some relevant European issues, such as the need to close the fitness check of the EU Nature Directives as soon as possible and the need to revisit the EU Common Agriculture Policy. Mr Caserta linked the latter issue to one of the Hawai'i Commitments that addresses the challenge of sustaining the global food supply by conserving nature, expressing the important role that IUCN could play in this discussion. He also mentioned agriculture as one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss and the need to move towards a different system that delivers for both nature and farmers, alike. Mr Caserta highlighted the Hawai'i Commitment of preserving the health of the world's oceans, emphasising the need to focus more on more on their protection. Finally, he discussed the threat of Invasive Alien Species to biodiversity and the significant effort the Honolulu Challenge represents in trying to address this issue.



From left to right: Luc Bas, Director, IUCN European Regional Office; Norbert Kurilla, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, current EU Presidency of the Council of the European Union; Angelo Caserta, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, Birdlife Europe; Dr Hilde Eggermont, European Regional IUCN Councillor; Humberto Delgado Rosa, Director Natural Capital, European Commission; Inger Andersen, Director General IUCN. **Photo credit:** Els Martens.

Discussion and exchange

Questions were first addressed by panellists to each other before opening up the discussion to include questions from the audience.

Norbert Kurilla spoke about the indispensable role of IUCN, both at the European and global level. His hopes for action over the next four years include further exploring the role of Nature-Based Solutions for European issues such as Horizon 2020 (where they are already well featured), but also in the implementation of relevant pieces of legislation such as the EU Nature Directives, where other IUCN tools such as the Key Biodiversity Areas may also be helpful. He suggested seizing the opportunity and finding linkages between biodiversity and climate action agenda, noting the leadership position the EU has in this debate. In order to do so, Mr Kurilla emphasised the need to engage with the private sector to help close the financial gap for conservation. The State Secretary looked forward to working together with IUCN in Europe to advance work on invasive alien species, illegal wildlife trafficking and broadening and strengthening the assessment of ecosystem valuation.

Inger Andersen emphasised the interconnectivity of our world and therefore the need to push the envelope and engage in the diverse drivers of biodiversity loss and their meaning. This is particularly important regarding the discussion on agriculture, which should address issues such as: climate resilient agriculture, nutrition, environmentally friendly productivity, and biodiversity protection in order to ensure the sustainable use of our ecosystem services.

Humberto Delgado Rosa, Director for Natural Capital at the European Commission (who stepped in for Commissioner Vella representing the European Commission) reminded the audience that IUCN has often paved the way for future policy, as the results from the last IUCN Congresses show. According to Mr Delgado Rosa, IUCN's resolutions such as the one on the IUCN's biodiversity offsets policy can be very helpful in Europe, where beyond the crucial need to enhance the implementation of the EU Nature Directives, the No Net Loss Initiative is necessary for the protection of the wider countryside. He also highlighted links between the green infrastructure and Nature-Based Solutions discussion, as well as the relevance of the food-agriculture nexus. In his opinion, the next steps for IUCN and the conservation community in Europe include a focus on key issues such as land use change and oceans' preservation.

Hilde Eggermont asked **Angelo Caserta** how he thinks IUCN could further bring together nature conservation and the finance sector. Mr Caserta mentioned the convening power of IUCN to approach actors such as the finance sector in Europe. **Ms Andersen** highlighted the need to embrace the economic concepts that the conservation movement might currently have some difficulties with in order to approach the bigger actors in this discussion, such as Business Europe. In this context, she noted that European conservation actors may have more experience with this, which could be a useful experience to be shared globally.

From the audience, **Genevieve Pons, Director, WWF European Policy Office**, highlighted the difficulties of bringing issues of biodiversity and nature to the forefront at the highest levels of the European Commission, a sentiment that was also shared by **Els Martens, Agency for Nature and Forests, Flemish region**. **Humberto Delgado Rosa** responded by mentioning that President Juncker of the European Commission includes solidarity as one of the priorities of the current Commission, which relates to cases of nature risk reduction and association, nature and biodiversity.

Ulf Björnholm, Head of UN Environment Brussels Liaison Office to EU Institutions, focused on the need to improve our communication on biodiversity. **Humberto Delgado Rosa** mentioned that one of the reasons why the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is perhaps less known than the Paris Agreement on Climate Change could be because there is a monetary tag attached to greenhouse gas emissions and more natural catastrophes are connected to climate change than to biodiversity. In this regard, issues such as the loss of pollinators may "help" to raise awareness of biodiversity loss. **Inger Andersen** reminded the audience that biodiversity loss is just as existential as climate change and a

better awareness of the quantitative loss of biodiversity or ecosystem services is needed to fully engage the public. **Angelo Caserta** added that we need to take a more holistic approach in understanding the connections between humans and nature. Mr Caserta noted the need to connect with nature and the importance of the IUCN Hawai'i Commitment to link conservation with spirituality, religion and culture. He agreed that we need to improve evaluating ecosystem services and economic indicators but we also need to reconnect with nature as individuals. In an effort to do so, **Mr Kurilla** informed the audience that UN Environment Executive Director Erik Solheim has been invited to the EU Council on 19 December in Brussels where they look forward to hearing Mr Solheim's recommendations on improving conservation communication.

Toby Aykroyd, from Wild Europe Initiative, voiced the need to engage with enterprises and the need to empower them in this debate. He also asked how best to deal with the global human population increase. For **Inger Andersen** and **Humberto Delgado Rosa**, there is an important work to be done to educate and empower women.

Professor Vivian R. F. Linssen, **International Multidisciplinary Neuroscience Research Centre**, mentioned the potential need for a new global governance system, as well as a need to rebuild trust before changing any future policies. **Inger Andersen** reflected on how far we have come from where we started and the spirit and motivation of the youth will continue to make the necessary changes towards a more sustainable world. **Humberto Delgado Rosa** agreed that perhaps the conservation sector is not moving fast enough but nonetheless, global governance is making progress. **Hilde Eggermont** stated that IUCN is playing a crucial role in the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. **Angelo Caserta** pointed out that the EU is a positive example of international governance, with an understanding that there is still work to do. **Norbert Kurilla** finished by saying that in order to overcome the trust crisis we should do our best in terms of action, collaboration and communication.



Photo credit: Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU.

Concluding remarks

Luc Bas, Director, European Regional Office, IUCN

Luc Bas summarised the meeting by highlighting the main outcomes from the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2016 that were identified by the panel as particularly relevant for supporting European policies and their implementation in the EU. There was a clear consensus that more action should be dedicated to the conservation and governance of oceans, action that IUCN has committed to through one of its Hawai'i Commitments - preserving the health of the world's oceans. The topic of sustaining the global food supply by conserving nature was also discussed. IUCN aims to take a broader approach in order to move towards a system of sustainable agriculture.

The panel also discussed expanding the conservation network to engage actors outside of the conservation network. There is a need to further support the facilitation and involvement of stakeholders in the interrelations between the business and the conservation communities as well as strengthen the link between conservation, spirituality, religion and culture. This involves improving communication in order to empower youth and reconnect people with nature. Exploring the initiation of an EU working group on biodiversity finance, specifically with IUCN's State Members was highlighted. The set-up of a global platform allowing for exchange of best practice between IUCN National and Regional Committees as a means to further engage partners and stimulate collaboration was also welcomed.

Finally, the IUCN European Programme 2017-2020 will reflect the foreseen action of IUCN in Europe during the upcoming years, mirroring the content of the IUCN Global Programme. The European programme is in the last stages of elaboration, with input from IUCN Members and experts currently being processed. The final version will be available by the end of 2016.



Photo Credit: Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU.

Final Agenda

- Welcome by **Norbert Kurilla, State Secretary, Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, current EU Presidency of the Council of the European Union** – who also joined the panel debate.

Panel debate:

- **Inger Andersen, Director General IUCN**(setting the scene: presenting the highlights and key outcomes of the World Conservation Congress and next steps for global action).
- **Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, European Commission, replaced later on in the debate by Humberto Delgado Rosa, Director Natural Capital, European Commission**
- **Angelo Caserta, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, Birdlife Europe**
- **Dr Hilde Eggermont, European Regional IUCN Councillor.**

Questions and Answers: Discussion with the audience.

- **Luc Bas, Director, IUCN European Regional Office – Moderator and Conclusions.**



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