

## IUCN Director General's statement on International Day for Biological Diversity 2018

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This year, IUCN celebrates 70 years of untiring work for biodiversity. Throughout its history, our Members, volunteer experts, staff and many partners around the world have proven time and again that conservation works. In effect, evidence shows that without conservation, global biodiversity would be on a much worse trajectory than it is today.



Yet, while these efforts have not been in vain, we are far from seeing the about-face on biodiversity declines needed to prevent a sixth mass extinction event. There is much work left before us, and not much time to get it done.

Human activities continue to drive biodiversity loss at an unprecedented scale. Healthy and thriving biodiversity is critical if we want to achieve the vision set out by the UN Sustainable Development Goals – a vision of protecting the planet from degradation while ensuring prosperity for all. But with biodiversity in such trouble, how can we achieve this vision by 2030, only 12 short years? Much will depend on what happens in 2020.



IUCN is not the only organisation celebrating an anniversary this year. Indeed, the theme for this year's International Day for Biological Diversity is "celebrating 25 years of action for biodiversity", marking a quarter century since, inspired by the growing global commitment to sustainable development, 168 countries signed on to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) which entered into force on 29 December 1993.

IUCN was instrumental in bringing the agreement to life. As an intergovernmental organisation, working since 1948 to ensure that nature conservation and human development can take place together, IUCN saw the CBD as a game changer in achieving its goal of a just world that values and conserves nature. It has since worked hand in hand with the Convention, providing the latest science and unique expertise to its Parties, and helping them achieve their aspirations. At the 2010 CBD summit, IUCN helped shape the ambitious 2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, or Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and continues to guide the world's governments in turning their commitments into reality.

The Aichi targets have been critical for rallying the world around biodiversity. But with less than three years to go, we must strive to come closer to meeting these targets. Projections indicate that we are on course to miss our commitments, and it is clear that many will be missed. But countries are now preparing to set new targets to halt global biodiversity loss, a last chance to get it right before the 2030 deadline to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. We must be ready to learn from our mistakes and achievements.

We must also look to successes elsewhere for inspiration. Inviting Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) from Parties is an example. This 'bottom up' and 'voluntary' approach, combined with a mandatory 'review and ratchet up' approach, could help transform the political landscape of the CBD by promoting ambitious country-led action and collaboration. It could also provide a more productive template for international cooperation on biodiversity conservation in the post-2020 period.

We must also get better at galvanising worldwide public engagement and support, thus putting pressure on decision makers. While we have been successful at communicating the plight of biodiversity, this awareness has not resulted in action at scale.

In June 2020, the IUCN World Conservation Congress will be held in the French city of Marseille. The Congress will bring together the world's leading actors for sustainable development to define how we can reverse the trend of biodiversity loss and ensure a successful achievement of the SDGs. Here, the governments, civil society and Indigenous peoples' organisations, business leaders and other critical stakeholders



must take the broader view of the world's challenges. They must design an approach that takes into consideration the direct interconnectedness between biodiversity and poverty reduction, food and water security, conflict prevention and many other ambitions we need to get right by 2030. And they must bring this broader vision to Beijing later that year, where the CBD COP15 will define the roadmap to 2030 for biodiversity.

The writing is on the wall: if we want to get 2030 right, we need to get 2020 right. The alignment of the IUCN World Conservation Congress and CBD COP15 is a rare and constructive coincidence that makes 2020 a year of particular importance and the 2020s a decade that could change history. As it has done since 1948, IUCN will continue its tireless efforts to conserve biodiversity. It will continue to support the Parties to the CBD in their crucial ambitions. And it will continue to work, unflaggingly, for life and livelihoods on this planet.

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