

# VALUES IN ACTION FOR THE FUTURE OF LIFE

## ADDRESSING THE GLOBAL CRISES IN CONSERVATION AND GOVERNANCE

IUCN WCEL Ethics Specialist Group | Congress Proposal | **DRAFT 22 April 2019**

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### With the support of:

The French National IUCN Committee  
Chair Bernard Cressens and Director Sébastien Moncorps

### IUCN Member endorsements (ongoing):

- Association des Naturalistes de la Vallée du Loing et du Massif de Fontainebleau, France  
Chair Jean-Philippe Sibley
- Ecological Society of the Philippines  
Chair Antonio Claparols and Vice-Chair Javier Claparols
- Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales  
Deputy Director Ana Di Pangracio
- The George Wright Society  
Executive Director David Reynolds
- International Council for Environmental Law  
Executive Governor Nicholas Robinson (Ex Officio Member Steering Committee, IUCN WCEL)
- Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, France  
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- Centre International de Droit Comparé de l'Environnement, France  
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- Awely, France  
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- Humanité et Biodiversité, France  
Chair Bernard Chevassus-au-Louis
- Association Païolive, France  
General Secretary Jean-François Holtof
- Fédération Française des Clubs Alpains et de Montagne, France  
Vice-Présidente Marie-Laure Tanon

The IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law, which houses the Ethics Specialist Group, including its Biosphere Ethics Initiative (IUCN WCC 2012 Res. 009), alongside the UICN Comité français, with the support of the members and endorsements listed, propose the following overarching theme to the IUCN 2020 Congress in Marseille: *VALUES IN ACTION FOR THE FUTURE OF LIFE: ADDRESSING THE GLOBAL CRISES IN CONSERVATION AND GOVERNANCE*. This proposal will provide our reasoning for the theme; several opportunities for engagement during the Congress; as well as planned preparatory meetings over 2019-2020.

## REASONING

We are facing an ethical crisis – a values crisis. And the consequences are a crisis in conservation (i.e. what we choose to “save”) and governance (i.e. how we structure ourselves, allot power, and make decisions). We are in the midst of a crisis in biodiversity loss, a crisis in climate change, a crisis in our humanity and the decisions we make, a crisis in the future of life. We are racing towards tipping points, pushing our planetary boundaries, and degrading ecosystems and the livelihood benefits they provide to billions of people. Underlying this toxic concoction of environmental woes is a values crisis: those things we see as important in human-nature relations, those things we seek to secure and hand on to future generations, are being eroded through a dominant values system that prioritizes short term exploitation over long term sustainability. Will we rise to address these crises, and with the seriousness and urgency required? Will we offer viable solutions that honor and advance our mission?

Ethics provides the platform to talk about, prioritize, and plan our actions in regards to our responsibilities and duties towards one another, to other species, and to future generations. It allows the space for serious dialogue on the most serious issues of our time, and across all IUCN components. And it also allows the opportunity for IUCN to be a global leader in advancing a new, living, evolving framework for global governance in conservation.

Ethical engagement, and highlighting the values that allow for a healthy, flourishing life on Earth, as the foundational theme to the conference:

- *celebrates and honors our individual and collective motivations*: as IUCN members, volunteers, patrons, and staffers, we care about nature, about conservation, about life on Earth.
- *creates a common ground to allow for serious discussion on complex issues*: the creation and application of science and justice is not value-neutral (IUCN); our partnership and funding choices are not value-neutral (IUCN); the creation and implementation of law and policy is not value-neutral (WCEL); the choice, creation, and management of protected areas is not value neutral (WCPA); the recognition and power of diverse voices, cultures, and approaches is not value neutral (CEESP); the teaching of conservation principles and policies is not value-neutral (CEC); the creation and application of species conservation approaches is not value-neutral (SSC); holistic and diverse ecosystem approaches to conservation are not value-neutral (CEM).
- *translates into direct action*, by the Secretariat, the Council, the Commissions, and the members.
- *highlights our diverse localized membership and our global home*.

Due to its history, its mission, its knowledge-base, and its network, IUCN has a particular duty to rise to the challenges that confront us because it knows better than any other organization the threats to life on Earth. It falls on IUCN to promote the understanding and implementation of fundamental ethical values needed for conservation and sustainability, to make a call for ethically-based action where the means and ends are consistent, and to propose practical guidelines towards how these can be integrated into the machinery and processes of governance towards achieving the ultimate goal: preserving life and the ecological integrity of Earth. After all, every decision provides the opportunity for ethical considerations. Every decision is based on particular values, often assumed and unstated, and the prioritization of those values over others. Let us raise these values choices to the forefront and show how they can and do motivate direct action in communities from the largest centers of diplomacy to the most local gatherings of villagers. After all, IUCN actions are IUCN's values in action.

International gatherings often beautifully and powerfully show the crises of global conservation, evoking powerful emotions with speakers, artists, and multi-media, but then too often individuals, organizations, and nations return home and continue business as usual in their day-to-day approach to conservation practices in science, education, law, and policy. Yet we know that business as usual is not working. Business as usual is allowing our global conservation crises to continue unabated. Let IUCN acknowledge this. Let IUCN change this. Let IUCN lead this change.

IUCN's mission is to "Influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable." To satisfy this mission, we cannot marginalize environmental issues and treat them separately from the overall challenge of just and

sustainable global governance. The aim of human civilization, if it is to have a future, is sustaining the life of the planet with dignity for all, and this cannot happen if we do not have the political commitment to make the sacrifices and new initiatives required. Unless we marshal the political will to act on the values of biodiversity and ecological integrity, we do not confront the international retreat from cooperation on this and every other major issue facing the planet.

IUCN long ago recognized that we cannot address the challenges of conservation in isolation from the challenges of sustainable economic development, human rights, participatory political democracy, and military security. How do we respond to mass biodiversity loss? How do we respond to climate change? How do we defend environmental defenders? How do we protect vulnerable peoples, habitats, and species, often targeted for their vulnerability or human utility? What does an ecological civilization look like? How can we connect and manage protected areas within and across borders to allow for proper evolutionary and ecosystem functions? How do we seek accountability for extinctions due to human actions? How do we respond to military growth, civil wars, and mass movements of peoples and the related exacerbations or weaponization of resources? How do we respond to the increasing economic inequality of individuals, private industries, and nations that directly impact resource use and allocation? How do we address major global actors that withdraw or neglect major global agreements to conserve life? Can we address conservation at all without addressing the influence and/or dominance of economic rationality, the power imbalances between actors and victims, and the absence or dereliction of political will? We are in the midst of unprecedented, large-scale crises – and yet with our vast network of science, education, law, and policy, we have not yet been able to rally global society to respond with the scale, scope, and urgency that the crises demand. Now, seriousness is necessary. Now, courage is necessary.

To highlight our ethical crisis – and our corresponding conservation crises – is to speak truth and give opportunities for real responses. In this era of science denial and alternative facts, society craves truth, and as a science-based and justice-based global conservation organization, we must speak that powerful truth. This is a decisive moment in history when the future of life on the planet, and the prospect of international peace and greater justice for the peoples of the world, are very critically at stake. IUCN has a responsibility to propose a Congress theme and program that reflects what is true.

Several IUCN Resolutions directly address the ethical foundation and approach to conservation in IUCN, yet all of the Resolutions, and indeed all IUCN action, show our values, even if we don't use that terminology: "values", "ethics." The creation of IUCN was an *ethical* action for the protection of nature, that showed particular values to science, justice, and the diversity of life on Earth. We need to look to our origins to help set the path for our future (see *The Contributions of IUCN to Global Ethics 1948-2018*).

## OPTIONS FOR IUCN COUNCIL, COMMISSIONS, AND MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT AT IUCN2020

### 1. High-Level Panels

The High-Level Panels would take place over the course of the Forum and the Members Assembly. They would include 4-6 prominent individuals from the IUCN community, including but not limited to Heads of State and Ministers, Framework Partners, Government Partners, Multilateral Institutions, NGO, and Foundations representatives, Patrons of Nature, Goodwill Ambassadors, IUCN Councilors, Secretariat, Commission chairs, and Specialist Group chairs.

Each High-Level Panel would focus on a particular theme. Ethics would be the opening panel, including at a minimum IUCN leadership and the Congress host. Each Panel would have a Chair, an indigenous member, and a youth member. Each Panel should link together its particular theme and foundational values.

### 2. Workshops and Knowledge Cafés

In an effort to highlight the theme, highlight the particular and diverse values of the members, find a way to unify the membership under the theme, and create a comparative end product of the diverse values of the membership, we would ask that at each workshop all participants, when introducing themselves or their project, shortly highlight:

- What are the values that underlie your work? Or
- What are the values that justify the means to the work, what are the values that justify the ultimate aims – and how can we reconcile the two? And
- *Why* – substantively – are you here (at this Congress), or *why* do you do the work that you do?

### 3. Exhibitions

Understanding and appreciating the diversity of values among IUCN membership, there would be a series of exhibitions that highlight IUCN projects, with a unifying theme of the values that underlie the work, that motivate us, that unite us. E.g. To highlight species conservation, “Life is impossible without diversity.” Or to highlight how ethics, and science, can bring people together, “Truth builds trust.”

### 4. Presidential Debate

At WCC 2008 in Barcelona, IUCN held the first and only debate among Presidential candidates, organized by members of the Ethics Specialist Group of IUCN WCEL. It had

a high turnout (over 250 people) and was considered a success. Therefore, we would like to see a Presidential Debate at each Congress. Please note, if this is more appropriate as a Resolution, we can certainly draft appropriate text.

Similar to Barcelona, the Debate will consist of a public panel of the candidates, with a moderator, to be held in a large room. Each candidate will be given time to publicly respond to the same 3-4 questions. The floor will then be open to questions from the membership. The entire event would run for 60 minutes.

It is crucial that membership have access to the candidates and hear them directly respond to member concerns, and it is crucial that we hear the underlying values of the person who will lead IUCN. Therefore, one of the 3-4 questions would be on their conservation values.

#### 5. Resolution

The IUCN WCEL Ethics Specialist Group will be working with IUCN Commissions and IUCN members to submit a Resolution that honors the Congress theme, and from a One Programme approach.

#### 6. George B. Rabb Conservation is Caring Award – will contact the SSC as a potential co-sponsor

George B. Rabb was crucial to the work of the Ethics Specialist Group (ESG) of IUCN WCEL, particularly its Biosphere Ethics Initiative (WCC 2012 Res. 009). We would like to honor him with an award named in his honor, highlighting his foundational conservation philosophy: conservation is caring. The ESG would lead this effort by creating a call for nominations, with the terms for selection, accepting and reviewing the nominations, and working with the Secretariat to present the Award at an appropriate event during the Congress.

### 2019-2020 PREPARATORY MEETINGS

Several conferences and workshops are in development with partner organizations.