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7th IUCN World Conservation Congress

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The IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC) held once every four years, brings together leaders and decision-makers from government, civil society, indigenous peoples, business, and academia from across the globe, with the goal of conserving environment and harnessing the solutions that nature offers to global challenges.

The 7th IUCN World Conservation Congress was originally scheduled for June 2020, but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was finally held from 3rd to 11th September 2021 in Marseille, France in a hybrid (in person and virtual) mode that had almost 6000 onsite participants and 3500 online participants from across the globe. The congress was formally inaugurated by the French president Emmanuel Macron marking a strong commitment to conservation.

The world is increasingly recognising the inextricable link between biodiversity conservation and human and economic wellbeing, a connection made all the more visible by the COVID-19 pandemic. The congress highlighted dual existential crises the planet faces – climate change and biodiversity collapse – and drew significant political attention, as it took place ahead of key global meetings on these two issues: the Glasgow Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 26) and the UN Biodiversity Conference (Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP 15) (Earth Negotiations Bulletin).

The main outcome document of the congress was the Marseille Manifesto, which highlights that humanity has reached a tipping point and the window of opportunity to respond to the interlinked climate and biodiversity emergencies is narrowing. Our existing systems do not work. Economic "success" can no longer come at nature's expense. We urgently need systemic reform.

The congress also resulted in the adoption of 28 resolutions on conservation and sustainable development issues. In addition to the decisions taken during the congress, 109 resolutions and recommendations were adopted through electronic vote by the IUCN Membership in October 2020. In total 148 resolutions and recommendations were taken up for voting through electronic votes and during the congress. Resolutions that attracted considerable discussion and/or attention included:

- on climate change, establishing a Climate Change Commission, as well as promoting integrated solutions on its linkages with biodiversity;
- on biodiversity, including contributions to the upcoming post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF);
- on rights, recognizing and supporting the rights and roles



Vivek Menon interacting with the indigenous peoples' delegates.

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- of Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' (IPLCs) in conservation, as well as protecting environmental defenders;
- on the ocean, protecting deep-ocean ecosystems through a moratorium on seabed mining and taking acting for biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction;
- on health, promoting the One Health approach and addressing the drivers of biodiversity loss to protect human, animal, and environmental health, and prevent pandemics; and
- renunciation of the Doctrine of Discovery to rediscover care for Mother Earth.

Another highlight was the contributions from Indigenous Peoples, youth, local authorities, and the private sector, including during four summits organized on the first day of the congress (World Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nature; Global Youth Summit; IUCN Local Action Summit; IUCN CEO Summit).

The two main components of the congress are Forum and Member's assembly. The Forum (from 4–7 September) provided the hub of public debate, bringing together people from all walks of life to discuss the world's most pressing conservation and sustainability challenges covering the seven congress themes (landscapes; freshwater; oceans; climate change; rights and governance; economic and financial systems; knowledge, innovation and technology) and the outcomes of the One Planet Summit presented by France.

The AsESG participated and delivered talk in two sessions on elephants. Dr. Sandeep Kr Tiwari spoke on impact on railways on elephants in India at the thematic session "*Corridors and Crossing: mainstreaming ecological connectivity into existing and planned infrastructures*" on 4th September. Mr Vivek Menon spoke on conservation of Borneo elephants at the session "*Assess-Plan-Act to reverse the Red within SSC*" on 5th September organised by the Species Survival Commission.

The Members' Assembly (8–10 September), IUCN's highest decision-making body involving governments and NGOs, took decisions on pressing conservation and sustainable development issues. The Members' Assembly also elected the organization's officials for the next four years, including the new IUCN president, Razan Al Mubarak from the United Arab Emirates (UAE). AsESG Chair, Mr Vivek Menon was also elected as the Councillor from the South and East Asia region.

Further reading

Summary Report, 3–11 September 2021
IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020
<https://enb.iisd.org/biodiversity/IUCN-Congress-2020/summary>

The Marseille Manifesto, 10 September 2021
IUCN World Conservation Congress Marseille
<https://iucn.s3.eu-west-3.amazonaws.com/en/CGR-2021-1.6-2_Marseille_Manifesto_IUCN-_World_Conservation_Congress_10_%20-September_2021.pdf>



The newly elected council of IUCN.