



World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)

Mandate 2021–2024

Adopted by IUCN Members by electronic vote on 10 February 2021.

VISION

Systems of protected and conserved areas are effective in conserving nature, and as such, are recognised and valued both as cornerstones for conserving biodiversity and as natural solutions to global challenges, providing benefits to human health, livelihoods and well-being.

MISSION

To develop and provide scientific, technical and policy advice and advocate for global and national systems of marine, freshwater and terrestrial protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) that result in successful outcomes for the conservation of biodiversity, based on principles of sound design, good management, and equitable governance.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas for 2021–2024, aligned with the IUCN Programme 2021–2024 and the Strategic Plan (the Promise of Sydney) adopted at the 2014 World Parks Congress, are to:

1. Catalyse and support global efforts to expand and improve systems of protected areas and OECMs that result in successful conservation outcomes and are a critical solution to halting biodiversity loss by 2030;
2. Promote and guide the design and management of protected areas and OECMs to deliver as natural solutions to global challenges, such as climate change, land degradation, food and water security health and well-being;
3. Advocate for management of all lands, freshwater and seas, including polar regions and areas beyond national jurisdiction, that support the conservation of biodiversity and the role of protected areas and OECMs in contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) especially SDG 3 Good Health and Well-Being; SDG 13 Climate Action; SDG 14 Life below Water and SDG 15 Life on Land;
4. Make the case for institutional, public and private investment in ecologically connected and effectively and equitably managed protected area systems, supported by public policy, incentives, and capacity development;
5. Inspire a new generation of conservation leaders, across geographies and cultures to experience and value the wonder of nature through protected areas so that they support and promote the conservation of nature;
6. Recognise and acknowledge the diversity of stakeholders and governance arrangements which contribute to the success of protected and conserved areas and systems and promote strengthening of such collaboration, as well as the appreciation of associated benefits by larger parts of societies;

7. Use our acknowledged role as a key global knowledge-broker and standard setter for protected and conserved areas to support efforts to improve governance equity, sound management and good ecological design that lead to successful conservation outcomes.

PROGRAMME PRIORITIES

The Commission will contribute to generate knowledge and support the implementation of all IUCN Programme areas, working closely with the Global Protected Area Programme, the World Heritage Programme, other elements of the Secretariat and other IUCN Commissions. This work will be advanced through the expertise that WCPA brings to the Union, incorporating the diverse perspectives and experience of the WCPA membership network, as follows:

Ensuring protected and conserved areas result in effective conservation outcomes

- (i) The WCPA recognises that to achieve the full potential of protected and conserved areas to halt biodiversity loss, and to meet the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), World Heritage Convention, other biodiversity conventions and the, SDGs, there is an urgent need to scale up effective protection of land, freshwater and seascapes globally ~~to~~. This should include protection of all sites of importance for biological diversity, ecological representation and conservation of carbon. Thus, the WCPA will work to scale up the conservation of nature with effective protected and conserved areas in support of agreed post-2020 targets and taking into account the variable conditions that exists in today's world.
- (ii) The WCPA will work with national, subnational and regional governments, indigenous and local communities and private landowners, on the recognition and completion of systems of OECMs that target areas of importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, especially in under-represented ecoregions.
- (iii) The WCPA will support and highlight the importance of developing ecological networks for conservation focussing on protected and conserved areas, and ecological corridors, and mainstreaming connectivity as part of conservation efforts in sustainably managed land and seas.
- (iv) The WCPA will monitor and support the recognition and management of OECMs as defined under the CBD and according to the WCPA guidance document. WCPA will work with UNEP-WCMC for the development of the global database on OECMs complementary to the World Data Base on Protected Areas.
- (v) The WCPA will work to promote the Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas as a global standard to deliver successful conservation outcomes.
- (vi) The WCPA will monitor and highlight the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and will encourage action for the rescue, recovery, rebuilding and expansion of the global network of protected and conserved areas.
- (vii) The WCPA will develop and deliver tools, best practice guidelines, standards and training to build capacity and professionalise protected area management, including support for rangers and others working to secure the integrity and values of protected areas and OECMs.

Nature and People

- (i) The WCPA recognises that many protected areas in the world are not effectively delivering on conservation outcomes because they are inequitably governed, underfunded and not well protected by laws. Thus, the WCPA will work with other Commissions, national and subnational governments, indigenous and local communities and private landowners to facilitate the equitable governance, effective management and sound design of protected areas, in line with country commitments under the CBD and respect for human rights.
- (ii) The WCPA will promote the full range of governance types for protected areas and OECMs, acknowledging the role and participation of indigenous land and sea managers and local communities; and promote the values of protected areas for human well-being and livelihoods.
- (iii) The WCPA will provide leadership and expertise and work with diverse stakeholders to improve, promote and support equitable governance in protected area management, including piloting of governance assessments and capacity building.
- (iv) Working with partners and communications experts (in particular, the IUCN Commission on Education and Communication and the #NatureForAll constituency), the WCPA will advocate the value and benefits of well-managed and equitably governed systems of protected areas to build awareness of their multiple biological, social and economic, health and spiritual values. The Commission will disseminate this information to make the case for increased levels of investment in protected and conserved area establishment, expansion and effective management.
- (v) The WCPA will build on lessons, case studies and strategies from global and regional protected area congresses, including the 3rd Protected Areas Congress of Latin America and the Caribbean, to recognise and promote best practice and diverse governance mechanisms to deliver effective conservation.

Promoting protected and conserved areas as Nature-based Solutions to address climate change and other societal challenges

- (i) The WCPA will continue to work towards mainstreaming protected areas as “natural solutions” in addressing climate change, land degradation, disaster risk reduction, food and water security, and human health and well-being. The WCPA will also develop technical guidance and advice on the sound design and management of protected areas to effectively deliver these benefits.
- (ii) The WCPA will work to explore global opportunities to collaborate with other sectors to conserve in-situ carbon in existing and new protected areas and OECMs on land and sea, as a contribution to mitigating the climate crisis.
- (iii) The WCPA will continue to work with the Rio Conventions to position protected and conserved areas as an essential contribution to the objectives of all three conventions, and to strengthen political support for them as management tools for ecosystem services. WCPA will work to replicate regional initiatives to incorporate protected areas into climate change and disaster risk reduction strategies and national commitments to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

- (iv) The WCPA will build on priorities from the 6th World Parks Congress and its Promise of Sydney to further explore and promote the linkages between healthy ecosystems and human health, especially exploring the linkages between protected areas, health and urban communities, including support for a One Health strategy for preventing future pandemics.
- (v) The WCPA will underpin its work across all programme areas with a strong capacity development programme to encourage and support new conservation leaders, including youth, and strong communication and outreach to demonstrate the relevance of protected areas to human welfare and well-being.

COMMISSION STRUCTURE

The WCPA is led by the Commission Chair, supported by a Deputy Chair and Steering Committee and an operational structure including task forces and specialist groups that will contribute to the realisation of this mandate. They will be supported by the Commission Support Unit, the Global Protected Areas Programme and World Heritage Programme in the IUCN Secretariat, and will work with IUCN's Regional Offices, other Commissions and IUCN Members to realise IUCN's "One Programme Charter". Thematic and Regional Vice-Chairs will be appointed to guide programme delivery and ensure there is a meaningful WCPA presence in every country of the world.

MEMBERSHIP

The WCPA will continue to develop a globally active, diverse and geographically representative network of experts to support programme implementation. Membership is voluntary and by invitation or application, with review by the Regional Vice-Chairs. Membership includes some of the world's foremost conservation practitioners, including natural and social scientists, protected area senior managers and staff, academics, young professionals, indigenous peoples and community leaders. The broad scope of work of the Commission requires the extension and strengthening of capacity through increased membership, strategic partnerships, active fundraising, and network mobilisation. The Commission works through specialist groups and task forces, with the collaboration of other IUCN Commissions on matters of mutual concern and interest.