



Summary Report IUCN Regional Conservation Forum Europe, North and Central Asia¹, Helsinki, 14-16 December 2015

The 2015 IUCN Regional Conservation Forum (RCF) for Europe, North and Central Asia, took place in Helsinki, Finland from 14-16 December, and was jointly organized by IUCN's European Regional Office (EURO²), the IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO) and the IUCN Finnish National Committee. Hosted by the Finnish Government, it welcomed 250 participants from more than 41 countries in Europe, North and Central Asia to discuss solutions to the region's pressing environmental challenges.

The RCF provided a platform for participants to evaluate the progress in the 2 regions on the current IUCN Programme and discuss priorities for IUCN's 2 Regional Work Programmes for the coming four years (2017-2020). The Forum also helped IUCN Members prepare for their participation in the next session of the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2016 that will take place in Hawai'i, USA on 1-10 September.

The timing of the RCF also enabled discussions on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in Europe and the ramifications of the Paris Climate Agreement.

In addition to IUCN's ongoing dedication to species conservation and protected areas, special emphasis was placed on the need to tackle unsustainable agriculture due to its growing impact on biodiversity loss. The IUCN members also recognized the necessity for the better protection and management of marine ecosystems, emphasizing that more attention should be given to the protection of Europe's seas with an emphasis on Overseas territories, the Arctic and the Mediterranean

The Forum allowed for discussions on opportunities for cooperation on elements of common interest in the two programmatic regions. Such collaboration should focus on policy development, capacity building and strengthened communication.

Participants also drew attention to the need for the IUCN to work together as a Union, comprising members, national committees, commission experts and the secretariat in order to

¹ This Summary Report is a reflection of the outcomes for the European Regional Office (EURO). The outcomes for the (ECARO) Office are detailed in the upcoming full meeting report.

² Europe, Central and North Asia are organised in 2 programmatic regions; EURO (All EU plus Western IUCN Statutory countries) and ECARO (All Eastern IUCN Statutory countries excluding the EU member states)

strengthen its work and thus maximize its impact. In the context of the development of the Workprogrammes this implies that in addition to the Secretariat, members, Commissions and National Committees who are willing to take responsibility to lead specific thematic areas can contribute to expanding the scope of work of the Union.

The conference concluded with the adoption of the '[Helsinki Message](#)', which expresses the priorities of IUCN in the Europe, Central and North Asia on nature conservation, governance and nature-based solutions.



2015 RCF, Helsinki, Finland. Credit: Anna Haukka

IUCN's governance, a toolbox for the 'One Programme Approach'

Motions, elections and Congress

Members had the opportunity to respond to the following motions proposed by the IUCN Council:

1. IUCN membership for local and regional government authorities or agencies
2. Options for IUCN membership for Indigenous People's organizations
3. Enhance the Member's Assembly's sole authority to amend the Regulations on membership
4. Election of the IUCN President: introduction of a majority requirement and 2nd round of voting

This session also provided an overview of the status of preparations for the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2016. It also focused on clarifying the rules for two important processes leading to decisions of the Master's Assembly and requiring active participation of IUCN's membership:

1. The motion process

2. The nomination of candidates for election to the IUCN Council

The deadline for submission of motions is February 12, 2016 and all information related to the motions submission process can be found [here](#).

During this session, the nominated candidates were announced and given the opportunity to present themselves.

Three candidates were nominated for the Statutory Region of West Europe: Mr. Jan-Olov Westerberg (SE), (Director General of the Swedish Museum of Natural History); Prof. Dr. Jörg Junhold (DE), (Director of Zoo Leipzig); Mr. Jonathan Hughes (UK), (Chief Executive, Scottish Wildlife Trust) (running for a second term).

The position of the Statutory Region of East Europe, North and Central Asia also received two nominations for candidates: Mr. Michael Hošek (CZ), (running for a second term) and Ms. Tamar Pataridze (GE), (running for a second term).

The IUCN Congress 2016 is an opportunity for members to exchange and learn as well as to meet potential partners and donors. The Members Assembly provides the space for adopting motions and agree on the future priorities and programme for action as well as vote for the Council and President.

The Framework of Action for Strengthening the Union aims to raise UCN's profile, leadership and influence within and beyond the conservation community and strengthen IUCN as an effective Union, including its membership, governance and structure. The plan for action is first approved by Council and then submitted to Congress for approval by Members.

The role of National Committees deserves further strengthening to benefit from sharing knowledge and experience to deliver results for conservation action across Europe and globally.



*IUCN's President Xinsheng Zhang, 2015 RCF, Helsinki, Finland.
Credit: Alec von Weissenberg*

Recommendations for the EURO programme development

As part of IUCN's 'One Programme' approach, three break-out sessions were designed for members to discuss IUCN's European Regional Work Plan for 2017-2020, how it can contribute to IUCN's Global Programme. The objective of these sessions was to define ways in which member's activities and priorities can contribute to the overall objectives of the Union in the European region, and how the work of the IUCN secretariat can add value to help members reach their objectives.

Valuing and Conserving Nature

Discussions during this session focused on issues, emerging trends, challenges and solutions to IUCN's work biodiversity conservation, examining both tangible and intangible values of nature. The key themes that emerged from the discussion included:

- A multi-stakeholder approach is needed for biodiversity conservation
- There is a need to communicate IUCN's activities to a wider audience and to share more impactful information on nature conservation to highlight the accomplishments of the union
- Increase the involvement of IUCN with cities, local and regional authorities
- Views on the added value of the Green List in Europe differ and deserve to be explored further with all stakeholders concerned
- The IUCN Protected Areas categories framework is thought to be useful to enable comparisons across different countries
- The IUCN Red List of Ecosystems should be promoted in particular at national level
- There is a need to educate the wider audience about IUCN products (e.g. Red List and Green List)



*Luc Bas and Boris Erg. 2015 RCF, Helsinki, Finland
Credit: Alec von Weissenberg*

Effective and Equitable Governance of Nature's Use

This session focused on European/EU policy issues whilst taking into account the global policy context. Participants discussed IUCN's priorities in terms of nature conservation policies, reflecting on IUCN's current policy engagement and providing guidance for future activities as well as define areas of common interest and action. The main points that emerged from this session were:

- To strengthen the focus on Target 6 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy
- IUCN should concentrate more on the monitoring of SDGs and Aichi targets
- Suggestions were made to go beyond focusing on species level and look more in depth at habitats in follow up to the European State of Nature Report
- A common approach should be taken with regards to wildlife and wildlife crime in balance with sustainable use
- CITES is a key issue to focus on. There is a clear need to prioritize tackling unsustainable agriculture IUCN's added value by bringing together different stakeholders especially governments
- There is a need to better protect and manage marine ecosystems and recognize the important role that EU Overseas entities have to play in achieving this
- There is a need for an EU vision on global ocean governance
- Improve communication with National Committees so that they can provide information to relevant parties when necessary
- The need to strengthen dissemination of the achievements and knowledge outcomes of the Commission
- Develop key links with governments at European level and engage more with them for the Development Cooperation Agenda
- Work more with state members and engage with Environmental Councils and Ministers, also reaching out to non-EU members
- Strengthen links with EU presidencies so as to bring together global and European debates
- Increase interactions between IUCN Secretariat, National Committees and Commissions

Deploying Nature-based Solutions to Global Challenges in Climate, Food and Development

The final session looked at ways for the IUCN and its members to promote the protection, restoration and use of ecosystems to address global challenges, by demonstrating the benefits of nature and healthy ecosystems and by providing support and guidance on how to implement nature-based solutions.

The discussion also touched upon assessing the value of natural capital and strengthening the evidence based on the benefits of ecosystem-based approaches and ways to mobilize the biodiversity conservation expertise of IUCN's network. Participants also exchanged best

practices to help upscaling of nature-based solutions. The outcomes from this thematic discussion were:

- To prioritize sustainable agricultural and food systems linked to land use and address how agriculture is a main driver for biodiversity loss
- Integrate natural capital in state accounts and those of corporations
- Map and assess ecosystem services in order to make the link between the Red List of Ecosystems assessment and to identify priority sites for restoration
- Clarify the definition of nature-based solutions
- Generate evidence base for nature-based solutions by highlighting social and economic benefits and making the case for restoration in relation to climate adaptation and mitigation
- The need to showcase the benefits of nature-based solutions and present them in a compelling and engaging manner
- The Trans-European Network on Green Infrastructure is an opportunity for the IUCN but IUCN's niche needs to be clearly defined



*Marina von Weissenberg, 2015 RCF, Helsinki, Finland
Credit: Alec von Weissenberg*

Recommendations from the Concluding Plenary Discussion

- Strengthen cooperation for World Heritage in Europe
- Effectively integrate and connect the work of IUCN in the Mediterranean within the two work programmes for Europe, North and Central Asia
- Biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the Arctic region is considered a priority issue

- The Covenant of Mayors, signed by over 6000 local governments in Europe to strengthen action on climate and energy can serve as an interesting initiative to follow for biodiversity
- A mid-term review of the EURO Work Programme 2017-2020 implementation is proposed to strengthen monitoring of results
- There is a need to strengthen the cooperation with the European Environment Agency
- Strengthen the recognition of wilderness in the EURO programme
- The Bern Convention is a unifying area of work for the two programmatic regions
- Strengthen the branding of IUCN and share more impactful information on biodiversity
- Greater involvement and ownership of IUCN Members and Commissions for the European Work Programme is a way to unlock additional resources.



*Members and participants at the 2015 RCF, Helsinki, Finland.
Credit: Anna Haukka*