



## **World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL)**

### **Mandate 2017–2020**

#### **1. Mission**

The mission of the World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL) is to assure the integrity and conserve the diversity of nature through the promotion of ethical, legal and institutional concepts and instruments that advance environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability (hereafter “sustainability”) and to strengthen the capacity of governments, the judiciary, prosecutors, law schools and other stakeholders as they develop and implement environmental law.

#### **2. Vision**

WCEL’s vision is a just society that values and conserves nature, supported and sustained by effective laws, with vital environmental stewardship systems at all levels of governance, including indigenous and local communities, that affirm the environmental rule of law and work toward ecological sustainability.

#### **3. Goal**

WCEL’s goal is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to employ environmental law for restoring, conserving and sustaining nature, and assuring that uses of natural resources are equitable and ecologically sustainable, through:

- a) advancing local, national, regional and international laws, administrative instruments and customary norms that are grounded in environmental ethics and further ecological sustainability;
- b) conducting research to strengthen environmental law and undertaking capacity building to enable governments and stakeholders to actively participate in the international governance debate;
- c) supporting the implementation of coordinated laws through institutions that respect the environmental rule of law and ensure effective compliance and enforcement;
- d) providing a central world forum for integration of environmental law into all aspects of governance; and
- e) creating and promoting partnerships to support implementation and enforcement of environmental rule of law and extending professional and expert networks dedicated to the legal foundations of ecological sustainability.

#### **4. Objectives**

WCEL will pursue its objectives in concert with the integrated programme of activities adopted by the World Conservation Congress in the IUCN Programme 2017–2020, and in cooperation with IUCN Members and components of the Union, through the Commission members and Specialist Groups, and in partnership with relevant international entities, particularly the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and other expert environmental law organisations, law schools, associations of judges and environmental prosecutors, as well as judicial institutes and schools, in order to:

- a) promote ethical and innovative legal concepts, legislation, and other legal instruments that conserve nature and natural resources to achieve sustainability;
- b) build knowledge and apply scientific, technical and other capacity in all regions to enable governments to draft, enact and enforce environmental law in an effective manner;
- c) work closely with the Secretariats of relevant Conventions and agreements that protect and conserve nature to support implementation and enforcement of those conventions and agreements;
- d) build capacity and educate governmental officials, including judges and public prosecutors, and stakeholders at all levels on applying law and policy, improving access to information and justice, and facilitating public participation in environmental decision making to ensure that natural resources are managed equitably and sustainably;
- e) engage with Members, National/Regional Membership Committees, and WCEL members to create robust environmental law knowledge networks;
- f) collaborate with each of IUCN's other Commissions; and
- g) collaborate with other components of the Union and Secretariat, especially the IUCN Environmental Law Centre and the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law, and partner institutions, including UNEP, the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (INECE) and UNITAR, to provide education, information and knowledge on law and governance necessary to achieve ecological sustainability.

## **5. Structure**

The Commission is led by the Commission Chair elected by the IUCN membership and a Deputy Chair appointed by the IUCN Council on the recommendation of the Chair. The Steering Committee is also appointed by the IUCN Council on the recommendation of the Chair in accordance with the IUCN Statutes and Regulations. The small Steering Committee assists the Chair and Deputy Chair in setting the strategic direction and providing oversight of the activities of the Commission.

## **6. Membership**

Membership of WCEL is a fundamental part of its organisation. Before the Jeju Congress it had very few members from Africa and parts of Asia. After almost four years, the membership is much more global, with a great number of new members coming from Less Developed Countries.

## **7. Priorities**

WCEL will implement its objectives through Programme priorities that further the IUCN Programme 2017–2020. WCEL's objectives will be implemented in an integrated way through its 2017 to 2020 Strategic Plan, expert membership, its network of collaborating centres of environmental law, the IUCN Environmental Law Centre, the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law, the Union's Regional and National Committees and Offices, and other professional partnerships, as well as with UN institutions pursuant to the Union's UN observer status. Other partners include the Organization of American States, GLOBE International, INECE, the International Association of Judges, the European Union Forum of Judges for the Environment. WCEL will address the following priorities, contingent on the availability of financial resources and through the voluntary contributions of expertise by its members and partners, in order to:

- a) *Strengthen WCEL Specialist Groups* – WCEL will enhance the effectiveness of its Specialist Groups with particular emphasis (a) on priority legal thematic areas, including biodiversity loss; climate change, energy and biofuels; coastal and marine degradation; natural and cultural heritage conservation; desertification; natural resource management; ecosystem protection; agriculture; soils; freshwater and wetlands; mining; and (b) on cross-cutting themes such as environmental ethics, indigenous peoples, protected areas, Arctic and Antarctic polar governance, compliance and enforcement of environmental laws, the judiciary, and national and international financial institutions, and to respond to requests made by the World Conservation Congress.

These Specialist Groups and themes contribute to ALL THREE Programme Areas (Valuing and conserving nature; Promoting and supporting effective and equitable governance of natural resources; and Deploying nature-based solutions to address societal challenges).

- b) *Promote the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law* – WCEL will promote and collaborate closely with the Academy as the world's leading network of academic institutions, universities and professors engaged in the research and teaching of environmental law.

Highest contribution to: Programme Areas 1 and 2

- c) *Collaborate with Centres of Environmental Law* – WCEL will continue to recognise, promote and collaborate with Centres, Institutes of Environmental Law and other partners in building coordinated information, research, learning and capacity-building programmes on the legal aspects of biodiversity.

Highest contribution to: Programme Area 2

- d) *Knowledge, capacity building, and technical assistance* – WCEL will collaborate with all components of the Union, especially its Members, Regional Offices, the Environmental Law Centre, the Academy of Environmental Law, and other partners, including UNEP, Convention Secretariats and INECE, to develop international agreements and national legislation, and implementation programmes, particularly in less-developed countries and regions affected by armed conflicts.

Highest contribution to: Programme Areas 1 and 2

- e) *Promote 'good governance' and the environmental rule of law* – WCEL will work with IUCN Members, UN institutions, governments and other stakeholders to encourage and promote 'good governance' and institutions to respect the environmental rule of law.

Highest contribution to: Programme Area 2

- f) *Support the Judiciary* – WCEL will continue to work with the judiciary and relevant institutions, both international and national, including judicial institutes and associations of judges, to establish a global institute of environmental courts and tribunals, to build capacity in the judiciary to provide access to justice, effectively adjudicate environmental issues, and apply and enforce environmental law, and to provide legal reference services and information databanks, including ECOLEX, the Judicial Environmental Portal and INFORMEA, and promote the development and study of environmental jurisprudence.

Highest contribution to: Programme Area 2

- g) *Promote programmatic synergies among MEAs* – WCEL will work with the Secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements in support of more coherent implementation, especially at the national level, governments and stakeholders, and with other conventions, agreements and processes to identify and promote synergies among them and IUCN's mission and Programme.

Highest contribution to: Programme Area 2

- h) *Strengthen the legal foundations of Conventions* – WCEL will study and undertake efforts to most effectively enhance the implementation and elaboration of multilateral environmental agreements and conventions related to natural resources, and provide expertise and capacity building for strengthening of national focal points, national implementation laws, including, for example, efforts to implement climate change-related commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Highest contribution to: Programme Area 2

- i) *Study and advance the conceptual development of Environmental Law* – WCEL will research the application of new or emerging international and national legal and governance instruments and principles, including the Draft International Covenant on Environment and Development, the Earth Charter, the principle of non-regression and the principle of resilience.

Contribution to ALL THREE Programme Areas

- j) *Sustainable Development Goals* – WCEL will study and undertake efforts with key partners to promote the implementation and strengthen the legal aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Contribution to ALL THREE Programme Areas

## 8. Expected results

WCEL's mission, objectives and priorities will contribute to achieving the IUCN Programme 2017–2020, especially in respect to its three Global Results. Some of the results will be of an **intangible nature**, difficult to measure in mathematical terms. However, WCEL expects that by 2020, it will have measurably contributed to:

- a) the integration of environmental law knowledge with the scientific and policy expertise of the other Commissions;
- b) enhanced collaboration with the Secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements in support of strengthened implementation of the different and relevant multilateral environmental agreements;
- c) the development and dissemination of environmental law expertise and networks worldwide;
- d) the development of knowledge and expertise of environmental courts and tribunals through new and strengthened institutions, including the *Global Judicial Institute for the Environment*;
- e) strengthening of the Early Career Group;
- f) the annual colloquia and other programmes of the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law;
- g) mainstreaming the Union's effective use of environmental law in its Programme;
- h) growth of the membership, particularly in countries or regions with few or no members; and

- i) the development of a communication strategy, especially designed for and targeted to the legal profession.