



Navigating Island Earth: *The Hawai'i Commitments*

On 1-10th September IUCN over ten thousand leaders and decision-makers from government, civil society, indigenous peoples, business, and academia met with the goal of conserving biodiversity and the natural environment and harnessing the solutions nature offers to global challenges.

The 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress was a historic event focused on the theme of "Planet at the Crossroads" in recognition of the window of opportunity now before us to meet the global challenges if we are to ensure a healthy planet.

Building on the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the World Conservation Congress was a unique opportunity where different voices came together to find common ground in a spirit of partnership.

While science continues to reveal how Earth provides for the conditions essential to life and human wellbeing, we often do not recognize the benefits that nature provides. Through either ignorance or blind eye willfulness, we continue to degrade ecosystems and the services they provide, depleting the diversity of life, and eroding traditional bio-cultural relationships. An alternative approach is not only possible but actively being implemented through the world based on the knowledge that nature conservation and human progress are not mutually exclusive but essential partners in achieving sustainable development.

We must undertake profound transformations in how our human societies live on Earth, with particular attention to our patterns of production and consumption. We must recognize that every form of life has value regardless of its worth to humans. Facing tremendous forces of transformation such as climate change and dramatic socioeconomic inequality across the world, delegates affirmed that there are credible and accessible political, economic, cultural and technological choices that can promote general welfare in ways that support and even enhance our planet's natural assets.



The Hawaiian Context

Meeting in Honolulu, Hawai'i, located in the heart of the Pacific Ocean, provided a special context for the 2016 World Conservation Congress, highlighting three critical issues for conservation in the coming decades:

1. The nexus between biological and cultural diversity and how their conservation and sustainability requires a combination of traditional wisdom and modern knowledge.
2. The significance of the world's oceans for biodiversity conservation, sustainable livelihoods including food security and climate change.
3. The threat to biodiversity from habitat loss and invasive species that result in the extinction of local species, cause irreparable changes to the habitat and biodiversity of invaded ecosystems, and alter ecosystem processes and functions.

These issues arise throughout the world and the Congress provides an opportunity to examine nature-based, life affirming solutions and the roles of community, governments and business in their formulation and delivery.

The Opportunities

To achieve the necessary transformations, we need to promote a culture of conservation. We need to support and build constituencies for nature, and we need to address the challenges posed by our societal systems that are changing nature and our world.

Promoting a culture of conservation

- *Linking Spirituality, Religion, Culture and Conservation*

The world's rich diversity of cultures and faith traditions are a major source of our ethical values and provide insights into ways of valuing nature that can help inform the necessary transformational changes in our dominant societal systems and guide the appropriate use of technology. The wisdom of indigenous traditions is of particular significance as we begin to re-learn how to live in relationship with, rather than in dominance over, the natural world. Also of significance here are the *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si'* and the *Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change* and their connections with ecological values and actions.

Solutions: We cannot create a stronger culture of conservation simply through mere technical means. The values and wisdom of indigenous people, and the world's rich faith, religious and spiritual communities provide a deeper understanding of the meaning of life and our relationships with one another and the greater community of life. To incorporate these



insights, we need a platform that brings together spiritual leaders with the conservation community to make visible the shared values that connect us.

- *Engage and Empower Youth*

We need to engage and empower youth for the planet, creating together the future we want. We need a global movement that inspires a new generation across all sectors of society to connect with nature and take action to support conservation. In an increasingly urbanized world where our daily lives are dominated by the Internet of everything, there are fewer opportunities for people to experience and connect with nature. Children often have little chance to engage directly with the natural world. People living in cities can be remote from the natural world with even urban parks being out of reach. Young adults of the technology age can feel that nature is irrelevant to them, yet have a greater stake in long-term sustainability. The world must support them to take the lead of the environmental agenda.

Solutions: When navigating island Earth, we rely on the winds of youth to fill our sails. It is their vitality and innovation that catalyze and sustain conservation action. Without them, conservation has no future and with them we can be assured of a nature alive and a life worth living. The conservation community has a responsibility to help youth and young professionals by inspiring those who have yet to care for nature, empowering those already inspired to develop their professional capacities and networks, and by lending our time and experience as mentors -- recognizing that youth have as much to teach as they have to learn.

Addressing the Challenges Faced by a Planet at the Crossroads

- *The Challenge of Conserving Nature in the face of industrial agriculture.*

As the intensification and industrialization of agriculture advances its footprint and displaces lightly or traditionally farmed areas, natural ecosystems and biodiversity are lost, as are human connections to the land. Release of GMOs and synthetic species disrupt ecological communities and evolutionary processes. Ongoing use of pesticides and herbicides and ongoing use of fertilizers and sediment loads leads to nitrification of waterways and coastal ecosystems.

Solutions: Providing global food security requires increasing the efficiency of food production, decreasing the waste of food, and changing food consumption preferences. We need to generate the knowledge – and do so with urgency -- to create the ‘roadmap’ to transform our food production systems so that they do not destroy the biodiversity and ecosystem services on which they depend. This will require bringing together currently fragmented organizations and



initiatives, and reform the current systems of counterproductive and perverse subsidies, taxes and incentives. We must strengthen the whole governance system managing our food production system. And while we need to increase overall efficiency of food production, we must also maintain crop genetic diversity and local systems of production.

- *The Challenge of Preserving the Health of the World's Oceans*

The world's oceans, and the communities that depend on them, are under immense and unprecedented human pressures. Destructive and unsustainable fishing practices deplete fish populations and degrade their habitats and spawning grounds. Pollution and plastic debris poison and destroy life. The integrity of coral reefs is threatened by rising temperatures, eutrophication, over-fishing, and ocean acidification. Rising sea levels flood coastal communities, and damaging storms affect livelihoods.

Solutions: Throughout the world, countries are embracing humongous Marine Protected Areas as the foundation for securing the future health of the world's oceans. The United States this week expanded the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, making it the biggest protected area on the planet at 1,508,670 km² and French Polynesia announced that their entire economic exclusion zone has been declared a Marine Managed Area, an area nearly half the size of Europe. The total area of MPA now exceeds that of land and the rate of increase is an order of magnitude greater. However, a joined-up approach to conservation management is essential if we are to solve the multiple, interacting challenges facing oceans. New knowledge of the severity of ocean warming impacts cannot be ignored. We must turn off the plastic tap.

- *The Challenge of Ending Wildlife Trafficking*

The illegal trade in wildlife generates tens of billions of dollars for criminals every year and it continues to grow at an alarming rate. The involvement of organized criminal networks and militias, pose a threat to national and international security as well as to social and economic development. The illegal trade in wildlife is leading to declines in the populations of target species, and often to their local extirpation -- pushing some species to the brink of extinction. Local people lose access to the natural resources upon which they depend for their livelihoods, community integrity, and income-generating jobs. Stopping this illegal trade will require concerted efforts on many fronts: better protection of wildlife populations, both through law and strengthened enforcement; behavioral change to reduce demand for these illegal products; and, greater cooperation at all levels, including greater involvement of local communities.



Solutions: Among the many consequences of globalization is the increased capacity to traffic in illegal wildlife. Well-organized networks of people and organizations provide the supply of wildlife and their products, and their distribution to manufacturers and consumers. Solving this problem piecemeal will not succeed. An integrated approach is needed that address the whole supply chain of illegal products – from source to consumer – and involve all stakeholders – national and local government, as well as local communities. Real outcomes can only be realized by addressing the needs of local people, so that the benefits of a legal economy outweigh those of the illegal economy.

- *The Challenge of Climate Change*

Climate change is one the most pressing global challenges confronting humanity today. Healthy ecosystems – terrestrial, marine and coastal – can act as powerful carbon sinks and reservoirs. Their better management, conservation and restoration – can make a crucial difference in enabling a low-carbon climate resilient world while also safeguarding biodiversity and aiding sustainable development. Furthermore, ecosystem-based adaptation helps reduce people's vulnerability to climate change impacts, providing significant co-benefits for local communities. The Paris Agreement adopted in December 2015 recognizes the value of these ecosystem services and the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems including oceans and the protection of biodiversity. The time is now to move from policy to action.

Solutions: The Paris Agreement confirms that the world community now accepts the reality of climate change, current and projected impacts, and the difficult fact that emissions from all sources must contract in line with what science prescribes to meet agreed global warming targets. Nature-based solutions have become widely recognized as an essential component of a comprehensive approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Building trust across the full range of stakeholders is critical to the Paris Agreement's successful implementation. The conservation community's contributions are vital, providing solutions that reduce emissions, helping vulnerable human and ecological communities adapt, and generating co-benefits for sustainability.

- *The Challenge of Engaging with the Private Sector*

The finance sector is increasingly aware of the potential that investing in nature has for generating returns, both in natural capital stock and also in economic yield. The corporate sector is increasingly aware of the importance of maintaining nature to secure supply chains and manage institutional risk, especially under the uncertain conditions that climate change will bring. And the conservation community, including government, is pressing hard for everyone to



acknowledge the undeniable urgency of sustaining nature for the future of humanity. Economic systems are needed that reward communities and companies for actions and investment that protect and restore nature. Equally, economic activity that destroys and degrades nature should be viewed as an economic cost imposed on the capacity of humanity and the greater community of life to survive and flourish.

Solutions: There is a palpable need to significantly increase investment in conservation action from both public and private sector sources. A precondition for private investment is that conservation opportunities exist at an adequate scale. Additionally, regulatory and policy regimes that incentivize private investment to promote conservation are necessary. Ultimately, a partnership approach – including government, private sector, private interests, financial institutions and the NGO community – are essential for success.

[Inspiring closing statement]

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