



IUCN
WORLD PARKS
CONGRESS
SYDNEY 2014

A strategy of innovative approaches and recommendations to reach conservation goals in the next decade

Submitted on 22 December 2014, following the deliberations of the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014

A promising future

- **Protected areas must progress, not regress: a step increase is necessary in the scale of protected area investment to deliver conservation goals.**
- **Protected areas must be established in the right places: those where they prevent extinction and reduce biodiversity loss.**
- **Protected area quality is more important than percentage targets: protected areas need to be managed effectively.**
- **The impact of protected area impacts must be monitored: this allows evidence-based management and incentives for success.**
- **Protected area establishment, and its documentation, must broaden from public protected areas: it should to also include private, indigenous, and local governance.**
- **Protected areas will require increased capacity to address novel threats: climate change, wildlife crime, invasive species, and disease.**

Protected areas, when properly and effectively managed, are a proven effective tool for the conservation of wild fauna, flora, and fungi; the persistence of well-functioning, intact ecosystems; and are the key solution to halting biodiversity loss. In addition they are natural solutions to a range of environmental problems and social needs on land and sea, and to maintaining essential ecosystem services that underpin human welfare and livelihoods. Protected areas must be considered as mainstream contributions to true sustainable development and incorporated into national development policies. They are essential for biodiversity conservation.

Protected areas now cover 15.4% of the planet's terrestrial and inland water areas, 3.4 % of the oceans and 8.4% of all marine areas within national jurisdiction (0-200 nautical miles). Only 0.25% of marine areas beyond national jurisdiction are protected. In total, 2.2 million square kilometres of land and inland water areas and 2.2 million square kilometres of marine area within national jurisdiction will need to be designated as protected areas to cover the Aichi Target 11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity's Strategic Plan.

The Congress reported widespread and heretofore largely unrecognized downgrading, downsizing, and degazettement of existing protected areas, and declines in funding and political support. Policy responses must be developed to ensure that protected area systems progress, not regress. This involves both a commitment to policies that support rather than detract from conservation outcomes and a step increase in protected area investment to deliver conservation goals. While the focus on moving to 17% land coverage and 10% marine coverage is welcome, the quality of protected areas is paramount: we should move from percentages to targets

for biodiversity protection. A common theme across the Congress has been a recognition that the quality components of Aichi Target 11 are more important than the percentage target.

Protected areas need to be managed effectively. A global analysis found that only a quarter of assessed protected areas were effectively managed. This has to change, and governments and other governing agencies must invest in effective management for protected areas to be successful. It was estimated that an investment of 76 billion annually is required to effectively protect all important terrestrial sites for biodiversity worldwide. This is relatively small investment in comparison to military expenditure or even what humanity collectively spends on soft drinks. Most importantly it is a small investment in comparison to the benefits that protected areas provide to people. Protected areas will also require increased capacity to address growing major threats such as climate change, invasive species, wildlife crime, and disease. Moreover, innovative sustainable financing mechanisms to ensure long-term protected areas management must be developed.

Quality of protected areas also requires that they are established in the right places, specifically those areas where they can prevent species declines and extinctions, and reduce biodiversity loss, thus maintaining ecosystem services. The Congress noted that a global analysis found that the existing protected area system continues to be biased to high elevation, low productivity environments of minimal value for other purposes, and thus do not avoid loss. The Protected Planet report found that protected areas cover less than 25% of sites of particular importance for biodiversity, and many terrestrial and marine ecoregions are still poorly represented. Targeted expansion of protected area networks is needed to include these key areas on the land, and especially the seas. Considerably more than 17% of the land and 10% of the sea will need to be effectively managed to meet the multiple elements of Target 11 and other Aichi Targets, such as Target 12 to prevent extinctions.

Urgent action is required by countries to advance progress on commitments toward meeting Aichi Target 11 in all its aspects. While the percentage coverage elements of the target are most easily monitored, other elements of the target, most notably coverage of important sites, effective and equitable management, ecological representation, and connectivity must also be tracked. These are fundamental to ensuring that protected areas halt the loss of biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides. There is still time to achieve Target 11 but only if there is increased political commitment and stronger cooperation from all countries and communities.

It is clear to the Congress that reaching conservation goals will require a broad system of governance types. Privately protected areas and indigenous and community conserved areas are increasingly recognized for their key contributions to reaching conservation goals. The Congress noted the critical need to provide clarity on the definition of “other effective area based conservation measures”, and how to fully report on this aspect of Aichi Target 11. Partnerships across sectors are also important to transfer skills and resources for protected area capacity development.

Protected areas also need to be embedded into integrated conservation systems, and large-scale connectivity and ecological restoration mainstreamed into landscape and seascape planning. There are many good examples of this in the world, most often led by non-governmental organizations, not governments. Available evidence for the outcomes of corridors indicates they have a positive conservation benefit. However, despite a growing number of large connectivity conservation projects around the world in recent years, there is still no agreed method to inform spatial planning by measuring connectivity at a global level, and we have little knowledge of the level of connectivity between conservation areas.

The Congress offered important solutions to increasing the quality of protected areas. It noted the unveiling of a draft standard for the identification of Key Biodiversity Areas, as sites that contribute significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity. For existing protected areas the Congress launched the IUCN Green List of Protected Areas as a mechanism to both celebrate sites that meet high standards of protected area outcomes and encourage the necessary dramatic improvement in protected area management.

There remains insufficient attention to monitoring the biodiversity outcomes of protected areas, in terms of ecosystem extent and condition, and species extinction risk and population trends, to allow evidence-based management and provide incentives for success. However, the congress noted an explosion of innovative monitoring technologies, tools, and activities that have generated huge volumes of new biodiversity data, but now require effective data management systems to ensure that these new data can inform immediate responses. Evidence-based management systems are still uncommon among protected areas, and site-level data are rarely collected and made available. We heard from people all over the world that innovative solutions are underway, along with existing tools that require enhanced implementation. The Congress noted important solutions to assist in the analysis and application of information, such as the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre and IUCN WCPA's Protected Planet collaboration, and other initiatives. Protected area managers, individual researchers and governments must be far more open and proactive about data sharing and keeping high quality records. Regional protected areas "human" networks can play an important role in data sharing as well as in capacity building.

The Congress was humbled by the passion, courage, and commitment shown by thousands of people from all around the world. In particular we noted the need to support the thin green line of rangers and other park enforcement staff who are the front line in the fight against threats to biodiversity. That support requires enhanced financial and technical support, as well as enhanced political will; it must also be coupled by efforts to tackle corruption and lack of effective governance at all levels. Poaching and associated wildlife crime as part of international trafficking is a threat to species, parks, and local communities, and requires effort at all levels. Similarly, to address invasive species and manage human-wildlife interaction, protected areas need to improve the efficacy of their action, building capacity of the staff, implementing effective management, engaging with local communities, and raising awareness at all levels.

The Aichi targets were designed as interim targets to halt biodiversity loss and to be implemented by 2020. They are interim targets and do not represent what is actually required for humanity to live in sustainable harmony with nature. Aichi Target 11 moved us beyond simple number targets to important consideration of protected area quality. We now have to move beyond the Aichi Targets to nature-based targets and there was much discussion and research presented on what these targets should be, planned region by region, with global coordination. For protected areas to halt the loss of biodiversity and thus provide key ecosystem services to people, they must be directed to areas of particular importance for biodiversity, be designed as connected systems, be well managed and be effectively monitored. To address many threats, conservation must also work across protected area borders. These are the primary considerations, more important than percentage targets. These targets for sustainability will require a rethinking of our personal expectations and how we live with more than seven billion people on this small planet. Some delegates argued that nature conservation will require at least half of the planet to ensure a truly sustainable future for both people and nature.

Achieving this vision will require cooperation to bring together all peoples of the earth, their governments, civil society, and business interests. We all live on one planet, supported by one living system. It will require courage to admit where we have failed to carry through with past promises and take the very hard decisions to manage land and sea for nature. It will take commitment to make a step change at the scale required, and to apply the innovative solutions we have collectively identified.

The current situation

UNEP-WCMC and IUCN's World Database on Protected Areas reports 15.4% of the terrestrial realm and 8.4% of coastal and marine waters are currently protected. Significant gaps remain in coverage remain, with many threatened species and areas of particular importance for biodiversity falling outside of the protected area network. Freshwaters are often only incidentally included as part of protected areas, or as borders to protected areas, without representative support for their management and conservation. Only 11% of countries have achieved protection of 10% or more of their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), and 63% of countries have less

than 1% of their EEZ protected. There is abundant evidence that protected areas conserve biodiversity when they are well managed. However there is also clear evidence that governments are not investing sufficiently to manage protected areas adequately. For example, recent research on vegetation loss in protected areas in South Asia has shown that rates of habitat conversion inside protected areas were indistinguishable from that on unprotected land. Biodiversity observation systems are not adequate to quantify biodiversity change across the globe. We need data to be complete, comprehensive and regularly reported so that we can accurately track progress towards meeting the Aichi Targets. We also need to network observations and models on the status and trends of biodiversity within and around protected areas as a means of measuring and improving their effectiveness. Different mechanisms must be employed to increase the financial resources dedicated to the management of protected area systems global as well as political decisions aimed at balancing economic development with the protection of biodiversity.

Recommendations for change

1. Countries include the Aichi Targets, including a full implementation of Target 11, within their revised National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, and implement these. These commitments must be kept: it is not a matter of starting again or ignoring promises already made.
2. IUCN adopts formal definitions of non-regression. Multilateral lending institutions and private sector actors develop policies and safeguards governing their engagement regarding protected areas that have experienced or are proposed for legal downgrading, downsizing, and degazettement.
3. Governments and partners give due attention to the underlying drivers of biodiversity loss, including consumption and population growth, governance and corruption, as key impediments to successful conservation and management of protected areas.
4. Governments and other sectors prioritize not only establishment of critical new protected areas, but focus on adequate resourcing, effective management and consistent and transparent monitoring of those already in existence.
5. Progress towards Aichi Target 11 should be based on a comprehensive global assessment of the effectiveness of protected areas management and how well they are contributing to biodiversity conservation, rather than just an assessment of area covered.
6. Countries fully report, taking into account all governance types, on their protected area systems (location, extent, management categories, management effectiveness, governance) into the UN List of Protected Areas through the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre and IUCN WCPA.
7. Countries support ongoing efforts to complete assessments of risk of extinction for species and risk of collapse of ecosystems, including documentation of the threats to these, especially by undertaking and repeating assessments following agreed IUCN standards and methods.
8. Countries, local communities, and the private sector consider prioritizing sites that contribute significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity (including both species and ecosystems, across the terrestrial, freshwater, and marine biomes, and recognizing the dependence of biodiversity on geodiversity) when creating or expanding formal protected areas or implementing other area-based conservation measures and safeguards, starting with the many thousands of such sites identified to date, especially those holding the last population of a highly threatened species.
9. Governments establish incentives and support for connectivity planning across both fragmented and intact

landscapes, including cross-jurisdictional initiatives. Functional landscapes and seascapes need their connectivity maintained through the establishment of large scale conservation systems and ecological restoration.

10. Global protected areas should include a specific focus on coverage and management of freshwater ecosystems in their own right rather than as a component of terrestrial systems, and should address downstream watershed protection where threats are greatest, as much as upstream landscape protection.
11. Countries and protected areas support the IUCN Green List standard and other species focused standards, for effective management of their protected areas and biodiversity, and work to achieve that standard.
12. The contribution of indigenous and local peoples, and privately protected areas to conservation is recognised and promoted, along with the importance of effective and appropriate legal frameworks that recognize, support and enable diverse types of protected areas governance.
13. IUCN should develop guidance on “other effective area based conservation measures” so this measure is best used for conservation.
14. Small grant mechanisms for the conservation of biodiversity are highly effective, and should be strongly supported in particular to help civil society in designing, governing and managing protected areas, complementing large-scale funding as part of resource mobilization mechanisms.
15. Countries, donors, and international funding agencies commit to increasing financial resources significantly, and in proportion to their budgets, and create innovative approaches to secure new financial resources for protected areas at levels that can enable effective management.
16. Urgent action must be taken by governments, the global and local communities, and protected areas in addressing the rising threats to biodiversity from wildlife crime, overexploitation, invasive species, climate change, disease, fire, and habitat degradation and loss. The critical importance of no take areas was recognized for marine ecosystems.
17. “Human wildlife conflict” is a major concern for many protected areas globally and threatens to undermine local support. The issue requires global support, and should be described as “human wildlife interactions” which reflects both positive and negative experiences.
18. A communication channel for emergency contact with IUCN should be established, so that international support can be obtained to rapidly address crises.
19. Governments and all sectors must adopt greater consistency in the collection, evaluation and reporting of biodiversity data within each country and globally, inside and outside protected areas, and make these data discoverable, available and accessible to support evidenced based decision making.
20. Governments and peoples must move far beyond the Aichi targets to adaptive conservation systems that are based on halting biodiversity loss (Aichi Target 12). This must be done balancing biodiversity and human needs. We need to increase conservation until biodiversity loss is halted. The total area of protected areas and connectivity lands needs to be far higher than current conceptions and delegates agreed on the importance of setting ambitious targets. Percentage targets are problematic in focusing on area at the expense of biodiversity objectives. Nonetheless, many delegates argued that these should be around 30% of the planet for no take reserves, 50% overall protection, and 100% of the land and water managed sustainably.

Key partnerships needed

Countries – Key decision making units.

UN Agencies and MEAs – Treaties, especially the Convention on Biological Diversity, CITES, UNESCO-World Heritage Convention, Ramsar Convention, UN Watercourses Convention, FAO, UNGA.

GEF – Global funding mechanism for expansion and management of protected areas, including monitoring to measure impacts.

Indigenous people and local communities – Increasingly powerful with an ability to teach mainstream society about living in harmony with nature; also managers of protected areas in many cases.

Protected Area Managers – Critical players in achieving effective and equitable management. Support protected area managers through experience sharing and capacity- building; strengthen cooperation among different stakeholders (decision-makers, scientists, private sector, NGOs).

Local communities, NGOs, and the general public – Vocal support for protected areas is the foundation for enhanced political commitment. Support is dependent on understanding of the benefits that PAs provide.

Businesses, especially tourism – Recognition that effectively managed protected areas are a key social and economic asset.

Scientists – Focus research on understanding the contribution that protected areas can make to biodiversity conservation.