

Proteus Partners update: IUCN World Conservation Congress Key messages for Proteus Partners from IUCN Congress 2021

IUCN World Conservation Congress takes place every 4 years for IUCN Members to vote on the Motions which set their conservation and sustainable development agenda. Approved Motions become Resolutions, Recommendations or Decisions which seek to influence global action on biodiversity conservation.

The event is also a major convening point for IUCN's stakeholders, to discuss conservation science and innovation. UNEP-WCMC hosted the Business and Nature Hub, together with the Capitals Coalition, Fauna and Flora International and IUCN in response to a need for more opportunities to showcase business action on biodiversity. The Hub was made possible thanks to the contributions and engagement of several Proteus Partners.

Many motions were voted on remotely in October 2020, but contentious issues were discussed, negotiated and voted on during the in-person Congress itself. The 2020 Congress was postponed twice, before being confirmed as a hybrid event. IUCN consider the event to have been a success despite the challenges of COVID-19.

Key themes from across the Congress of relevance to Proteus Partners include:

- The possible direction and ambition of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be negotiated in 2022
- The importance of country-level engagement and locally owned action
- The need for cross-sectoral collaboration to “bend the curve” of biodiversity loss, particularly in light of the connections between the nature and climate crises
- Recognition of the importance of unlocking biodiversity data to support a wider range of decisions
- The need for progress on biodiversity measures for businesses
- Further support for the role of natural capital accounting
- An emphasis on avoiding and mitigating marine impacts

This Proteus Partners update summarises key reflections and messages from IUCN Congress relevant to Proteus Partner companies, highlighting priority issues on the international agenda in advance of the Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) negotiations to finalise the new post-2020 global biodiversity framework.



Jonathan Hughes (WCMC CEO, UNEP-WCMC) addresses a panel in the Business and Nature Hub at IUCN World Conservation Congress

Key themes from IUCN Congress and Business & Nature Hub

Towards an ambitious post-2020 framework

Set against the background of irrefutable scientific evidence that biodiversity is deteriorating at an alarming rate, the Congress emphasised the need for transformative change to enable us to live in harmony with nature. The Congress motions and sessions should be seen in the context of the CBD COP15 negotiations in Kunming (Apr-May 2022). There was a hope throughout the Congress that the post-2020 global biodiversity framework to be agreed will be ambitious and set out a plan to transform and align the whole of society's relationship with biodiversity.

Many actors at Congress, including business leaders and conservation organisations, called for the mobilisation of businesses and ambitious global targets that combine nature positive, climate neutral and socially equitable outcomes. Actions that combine human well-being with biodiversity benefits, such as [Nature-based Solutions](#), were endorsed throughout Congress, including the Business and Nature Hub.

Discussions and motions at Congress often reflected the need for ambitious targets to achieve nature positive by 2030. This will require many companies to undergo remarkable transformative change, a process that will also help secure the future of businesses themselves. This requires robust understanding of impacts and dependencies on nature, supported by standardised approaches to measure, and fully embed the value of nature into decision-making and implementation. It was emphasised during Congress that achieving nature positive by 2030 must also take into consideration historic impacts on biodiversity.

Country-level engagement and locally owned action

Numerous success stories of on the ground action from IUCN members, companies and organizations highlighted the importance of locally owned action and the challenges and

opportunities for business engagement at the country-level. A session at the Business and Nature Hub reported on the IUCN's [BIODEV2030](#) initiative, which brings together knowledge from the public and private sector to accelerate the process of mainstreaming biodiversity in economic development. Their work has highlighted the need for inclusive solutions that place biodiversity within the local context and ensure the effective engagement of key stakeholders, such as women and indigenous communities.

There has been recent controversy about the way indigenous people and local communities are engaged and treated in the context of conservation action. This was evident at the Congress, and is expected to continue. There is likely to be some response from conservation organisations to adapt to some of this criticism.

Bending the curve through cross-sectoral collaboration

The importance of landscape scale thinking through cross-sectoral collaboration was emphasised throughout Congress and is a vital component of the journey to reach nature positive. This will require moving beyond biodiversity risk mitigation towards creating value for stakeholders and shareholders through restoration activities.

The private sector will need to think about its impacts in a cumulative way, incorporating all other actors in the landscape and value chain, including other businesses, communities, governments, NGOs and technical organisations. Many industries are already beginning to improve their impact on nature through wasting less and becoming more regenerative, however, it was stressed during Congress that more needs to be done to engage the entire value chain, including engagement with small and medium sized enterprises.

Unlocking biodiversity data

There is a huge volume of biodiversity data that is being released into the world, but for it to be useful, it needs to be accessible to those who need it. There were calls for the private sector to help unlock biodiversity information, by making their data accessible to people in a cost and time effective way. The Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) was given as an example of how using standardised templates to record data and ensuring that initial terms of reference state clearly who owns the data and who can use it, helps to speed up this process.

As the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures becomes established, it is clear that access to decision-grade data will become increasingly important.

Biodiversity measures for business

Approaches for corporate biodiversity measurement and mainstreaming biodiversity in the private sector were key topics at the Business and Nature Hub. Sessions highlighted tools that businesses can use to prioritise their actions, recommending a '3D' approach – Diagnose, Dialogue, Disseminate.

Use of the STAR (Species Threat Abatement and Restoration) metric, a tool recently launched in IBAT, was discussed as a potential way for companies to guide and prioritise investments in species conservation and to quantify contributions to global sustainability targets.

The Biodiversity Indicators for Site Based Impacts (BISI) framework also received broad interest and support. BISI can help measure corporate performance on the ground and identification of indicators that allow businesses to select priorities for action. This in turn can feed into foot printing and indicator methodologies, such as the Align project (Aligning accounting approaches for nature) and Science-based Targets for Nature.

Many companies showcased how they promote and incorporate biodiversity measurement and disclosure, raising the bar and encouraging other businesses to follow suit. It was noted however that voluntary action is insufficient to create the behaviour change and impact we need to

address biodiversity loss and that establishing regulatory frameworks, including mandatory disclosure, is still an important step. Practitioners at the Business and Nature Hub agreed that while better integration of biodiversity in business models are required, inaction can no longer be attributed to a lack of tools. Ultimately however, metrics must not be mistaken for objectives and the importance of having a strong base of objectives for what we want to achieve and measure progress against was stressed.

Natural capital accounting

Conversations highlighted strong benefits of natural capital accounting when informing decision making in both public policy and business contexts. There are opportunities for collaboration between the public and private sectors, to strengthen alignment of approaches and increase access to data. Speakers noted that the finance sector will be an important driver for businesses to kickstart natural capital accounting approaches. Dialogue with insurance companies was recommended to provide financial products and opportunities that reward businesses for becoming more nature positive.

Avoiding and mitigating marine impacts

Impacts to marine environments were explored and discussed during several sessions at Congress. It was stressed that impacts on the sea should be avoided as much as possible, given the uncertainty around restoration. Technology for deep sea monitoring and restoration is desperately needed, but current provision is lacking. Recognising the environmental, social, cultural and economic risks of deep-sea mining, motion 069 was passed calling for a moratorium on all deep-sea mining activities, as well as the reform of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) - the UN-mandated body charged with regulating mineral-related activities in seabed areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ). This motion is in direct contradiction to the ISA's work to develop its 'Mining Code' to allow mineral exploitation permits in ABNJ. According to the ISA, the exploitation regulations aim to balance economic needs with environmental protection. Although no exploitation currently takes place in ABNJ, the state of Nauru recently triggered a two-year rule

contained within UNCLOS (UN Convention on the Law of the Sea) by informing ISA that it intends to begin deep-sea mining in two years' time. ISA must update the Mining Code before this deadline and with progress already delayed by COVID-19, there are concerns that rushing the process will lead to inadequate environmental regulations and irreversible damage to deep-sea biodiversity. Separately, an international agreement under UNCLOS that aims to support conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) is currently

being negotiated. The moratorium aims to delay deep seabed mining until extensive assessments of potential risks and threats have been conducted and sufficient scientific evidence available to guide, effective environmental protection. Environmental Impact Assessment is also part of the BBNJ implementing agreement. However, the agreement aims to build upon existing frameworks and processes and avoid undermining them, therefore this motion is likely to be of more relevance to the ISA.

IUCN Members' Assembly Resolutions

The Motions passed as Decisions, Resolutions and Recommendations by the Members Assembly at IUCN Congress form an important governance function for the Union. There are similarities between the way the final text of the Motions is agreed and the negotiations of multilateral environmental agreements like the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Motions text is then voted on by the IUCN Members, which include 92 States and 121 Government Agencies. As such, while the Resolutions do not carry the weight of the Decisions made under UN Conventions, they can give an indication of the direction being taken by the conservation community at large and among Parties to those Conventions.

Many Motions were voted on remotely in October 2020, but the more contentious or debated Motions were negotiated at Congress itself and voted on in person. Two such motions approved at the Congress are particularly relevant to Proteus Partners:

101 - Setting area-based conservation targets based on evidence of what nature and people need to thrive. This motion formalises IUCN's position on an area-based target for the coverage of protected areas and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures. It has two key components specifying the area coverage in the strongest formal language. Firstly, to respect and communicate the emerging science which points to protecting at least 50% of the planet's surface to reverse the loss of nature. Secondly, formal support for the proposed 30% coverage target by 2030 in the post 2020 global biodiversity framework.

069 - Protection of deep-ocean ecosystems and biodiversity through a moratorium on seabed mining. This motion again uses the strongest formal language to call on State Members of IUCN to support a moratorium on seabed mining until a series of stringent requirements are met, as well as the reform of the International Seabed Authority (ISA).

Other relevant resolutions

038 - Promoting biodiversity preservation through environmentally friendly energy transformation measures. This motion pushes towards pathways that achieve 100% clean energy by 2050 in support of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals.

040 - Develop and implement a transformational and effective Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

All stakeholders across society must join forces to implement a post-2020 global biodiversity framework that reflects the need for urgent transformative change, in order to halt drivers of biodiversity loss and secure the planet's life support system.

064 - Promoting sustainable and ethical mining practices in Africa. Mining activities in Africa require urgent supply-chain stewardship and this motion asks the mining sector to adapt and strengthen supply-chain standards and assurance systems.

086 - Wildlife-friendly linear infrastructure. Despite harming wildlife, the environment and ecological connectivity, linear infrastructure is increasing. This motion encourages relevant actors to increase collaboration to implement existing guidance and to exceed compliance with existing laws and policies, when developing new (and addressing existing) linear infrastructure.



Key takeaways from the Business and Nature Hub

The Business and Nature Hub aimed to inform the vital role of the private sector in achieving global conservation targets by providing a dialogue between businesses, conservation organisations, governments and more. Discussions at the Hub focused on relevant topics such as measuring and valuing nature for corporate decision making, implementing nature-based solutions for net gain targets, conservation across supply chains and supporting and enabling business action. There was a markedly higher level of engagement and awareness between the business and conservation communities compared to previous years, with eagerness for collaboration and cocreation of solutions.

Key takeaways from the Business and Nature Hub partners:

Integrated solutions: We need to stop focusing solely on nature, and even the idea of ‘two-sided coin’ of nature and climate. The challenges of social equity, climate change and nature must be addressed together.

Radical collaboration is needed: The only way forward is to work together. We need to respect and harness the agency of all actors in the landscape in order to reach nature positive.

Set targets and act upon them now: We must act urgently on our commitments to nature positive. The perfect metric or tool does not exist, but what we do have is fit for purpose and can be used immediately. However, standardisation and synergy must be found between measurement frameworks, disclosure frameworks and frameworks for action. In addition, disclosing impacts and dependencies on nature (Draft Target 15 of the post 2020 global biodiversity framework) must be supported by legislation and capacity building across the full value chain.

Valuing nature appropriately: In order to change our habits, we need to put a price on natural resources. Businesses are willing to pay for natural resources and we should ensure that there are incentives to reward positive outcomes for nature.

Disaggregating the private sector: To achieve economic reform we need to disaggregate the private sector and provide granularity on what actions each company can contribute.

Investment and the gap between supply and demand: Sustainably financed and fully resourced projects aimed at bending the curve will be in high demand. We must clarify how investment from the finance sector will support the many projects and tools needed for conservation, restoration and livelihood generation.

The Business and Nature Hub and the Congress as a whole were well-attended, both online and in person:

Business and Nature Hub impacts:

- 28 sessions and events
- 100 speakers
- Over 1,800 YouTube views
- 200 hours watched
- Over 8,200 social media

IUCN Congress attendance:

- Onsite participants: 5,700
- Online participants: 3,500
- Total registered participants: 9,200
- Visits by the general public: 25,000