

Commission on Environmental, Economic, and Social Policy (CEESP)

Draft Mandate 2026–2029

VISION

A world where sustainability, social justice, equity and cultural diversity are central to nature conservation, and where conservation addresses the urgency and challenges of our planet.

MISSION

To advance the IUCN mission by generating knowledge, mobilising influence and promoting actions that integrate nature conservation with social, cultural, environmental and economic justice, while addressing the intersection of conservation and climate in an increasingly complex world.

STRATEGIC APPROACHES

The Commission fulfils its mission by engaging its members, other IUCN Commissions, IUCN Members, the IUCN Secretariat and key stakeholders through policy development, field-based research, expert knowledge and targeted actions to:

A. Identify and analyse

Identify, analyse and learn from policies and practices at the intersection of nature conservation, socioeconomic concerns, environmental justice, and the cultural and spiritual concerns of human communities. This includes gathering and analysing case studies and field experiences that highlight the connections between conservation, social equity and justice.

B. Thought leadership

Shape global conservation dialogues by offering visionary perspectives on the intersection of nature conservation, social justice, climate change and sustainable development.

CEESP leverages its convening role to bring together diverse stakeholders – including policymakers, researchers, Indigenous peoples, and local communities – to engage in high-level discussions that shape the global conservation agenda. By contributing to influential publications, guiding decision-making processes, and fostering collaboration and innovation, CEESP ensures that transformative solutions and cutting-edge ideas are prioritised in conservation policy and practice. Through these efforts, CEESP will inspire the global community to adopt more resilient, just and effective conservation approaches.

C. Promote holistic approaches

Promote a holistic approach to nature conservation and sustainable development across IUCN, recognising complexities and fostering dialogue and collaborative learning. This approach should respect diverse values, knowledges and experiences, ensuring that conservation strategies are inclusive and culturally appropriate.

D. Conduct innovative research

Conduct and synthesise cutting-edge research on key environmental, economic and social issues. The aim is to provide actionable insights and evidence-based recommendations to IUCN Members, staff, Commission members and field partners, supporting informed decision-making and impactful conservation.

E. Advise on policies and practices

Provide advice on the policies and practices of public, private and civil society institutions regarding the conservation of nature. Ensure these institutions integrate social and environmental dimensions into their conservation and development agendas.

F. Enhance IUCN's capacity

Contribute to the implementation of the IUCN Programme and support IUCN's 20-year Strategic Vision by enhancing its capacity through the participation of diverse cultures and constituencies. This includes integrating different forms of knowledge, experience and skills from various sectors and stakeholders to strengthen IUCN's influence and reach.

By fostering inclusive collaboration, IUCN will be better positioned to achieve its long-term goals and respond to the evolving global challenges in conservation.

G. Support and advocate for inclusive participation

Support and advocate for the full and effective participation and leadership of Indigenous peoples and Local communities (IPLCs), women, youth, intergenerational leaders and communities of faith in all levels of conservation and development policy and practice. Actively promote the inclusion of these groups in decision-making processes, ensuring their perspectives are integrated into policy frameworks. Advocate for policies that enhance their rights and capacities, and foster empowerment through capacity building, equitable participation, and the protection of their cultural and environmental rights. These efforts will ensure that advocacy and support are woven into both local and global conservation efforts.

PROGRAMME PRIORITIES

1. A holistic approach to tackling the Climate and Biodiversity Crisis

Address the interconnected challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss as part of the broader planetary crisis by advancing policy recommendations that promote ecosystem resilience, biodiversity conservation and climate resilience – including addressing links between illicit financial flows, crimes that affect the environment, and corruption. Conservation is central to the solution, as healthy ecosystems provide natural defences against climate impacts and support Nature-based Solutions. CEESP will collaborate with policymakers, stakeholders across sectors, and Indigenous peoples and Local communities (IPLCs), whose leadership is vital to sustainable, community-driven climate and biodiversity actions. Emphasising the social dimensions of these crises ensures that equitable, inclusive solutions are implemented, positioning conservation as a key driver of resilience in addressing our planetary challenges.

2. Reimagining conservation

Develop and promote innovative conservation models that reflect the changing political, economic and environmental landscapes while addressing the growing challenges of achieving conservation goals in politically polarised environments. This includes fostering dialogue and collaboration across different political, social and cultural perspectives to create inclusive, equitable and climate-connected conservation approaches. These approaches should be resilient, adaptive and capable of bridging divides to ensure long-term sustainability and inclusivity in conservation efforts. Prioritise collaboration that integrates conservation with broader social and political contexts, enabling conservation to thrive even in politically charged or divided environments.

3. Responsible business and economic leadership for conservation

Develop policies and practices that promote sustainable, equitable and human rights- based business engagement in conservation. Focus on economic analysis to deepen understanding of the links between conservation and development, emphasising long-term sustainability and social equity. Engage the business sector to adopt nature positive approaches, implement circular economy

principles, prevent biodiversity loss and uphold human rights. Align conservation and social justice goals with financial incentives and sustainable development strategies, creating a framework where environmental protection and social equity are integral to economic and business decision-making.

4. Governance, human rights and equity

Strengthen governance frameworks that prioritise equity, transparency and the protection and promotion of human rights in the management of land, sea and natural resources. Ensure these systems respect the rights of Indigenous peoples and Local communities (IPLCs), are gender-inclusive and address the needs of other vulnerable communities. Special emphasis will be placed on safeguarding the rights and safety of environmental defenders, who are at the forefront of protecting ecosystems and advocating for social and environmental justice. Promote governance models that integrate social justice, equity, environmental sustainability and human rights, fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders. These efforts will support the creation of resilient, equitable governance systems that protect both ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

5. Flourishing diversity

Ensure conservation policies respect, preserve and promote cultural, biocultural and spiritual diversity, as well as heritage. Support and foster initiatives that protect sacred and culturally significant sites, intangible cultural heritage, cultural landscapes, Indigenous and traditional knowledge systems, innovations, practices, language diversity and spiritual traditions. Recognise and advance the intrinsic interconnectedness of nature, culture, faith and spirituality. Invest in conservation efforts that actively promote cultural resilience, elevate cultural expressions, and support the flourishing of both human and non-human communities. Additionally, prioritise environmental education and awareness to emphasise the role of cultural and spiritual diversity in sustaining ecosystems, fostering deeper understanding and stewardship of the natural world.

6. Youth development and diverse leadership in conservation

Prioritise the empowerment of young and diverse leaders in conservation by providing intergenerational mentorship, capacity-building opportunities, and ensuring access to resources and platforms for meaningful participation and leadership. Foster a leadership approach that embraces diversity, including gender, cultural and Indigenous perspectives, to ensure conservation efforts are inclusive and representative of all voices. Build a global network of young, diverse leaders equipped to address complex global challenges and drive innovative conservation solutions.

Encourage collaboration across generations and diverse backgrounds to ensure inclusive leadership shapes the future of conservation, fostering transformative and equitable change.

STRUCTURE

The Commission is led by the Commission Chair, elected by the IUCN membership, and by a Deputy Chair appointed by the IUCN Council on the recommendation of the Chair. The Steering Committee of CEESP is appointed according to the IUCN Statutes and Regulations and assists the Chair and Deputy Chair in guiding and coordinating the activities of the Commission. How the Commission is organised to deliver results in the programme areas is at the discretion of the Chair, in consultation with the Deputy Chair and Steering Committee as appropriate.

The Chair also participates as a full voting member of the IUCN Council.

MEMBERSHIP

The Commission has a diverse membership in terms of disciplines, cultures, languages, geographical regions, spiritual traditions, ages and gender, bringing diverse perspectives, values and experiences to bear in debating, analysing and promoting the issues of concern to its vision and mission. Membership includes some of the world's foremost conservation and sustainable development practitioners, natural and social scientists, and traditional Indigenous community leaders. Experts from major conservation and development organisations and young professionals with proven capacities in sustainable development at the community, national, regional and international levels provide

valuable contributions to the work of the Commission.

Membership is voluntary and by invitation or through application, usually with the support of a professional reference or existing Commission members. The broad scope of the Commission requires the extension and strengthening of capacity through increased membership, strategic partnerships, active fundraising and network mobilisation.

CEESP and the Secretariat

CEESP works in close collaboration with the IUCN Secretariat and across a broad range of global and regional programmes. This includes, but is not limited to, key areas such as human rights in conservation, Indigenous peoples and Local communities, gender equality, economics and nature positive policy development.

CEESP and IUCN Members

In parallel, CEESP actively engages with IUCN Members – governments, civil society organisations, and Indigenous Peoples' Organizations – to co-produce knowledge, support policy influence and promote on-the-ground innovation. By connecting local experiences to global processes, CEESP strengthens the Union's ability to respond to today's interconnected biodiversity, climate and justice challenges.

This dual engagement with both the Secretariat and Members reinforces CEESP's unique role as a bridge between knowledge, practice and policy across the IUCN system.