

## **010 Preserving forest soils and their biodiversity**

CONSIDERING that soils, which are the result of thousands of years of evolution, are essential components of forest ecosystems, providing a vital habitat (nutrients and water) for many species; CONSIDERING that forest soils constitute a major reservoir of biodiversity, being able to shelter up to ¼ of known species and that, given the multitude of interactions, this biodiversity guarantees the functioning and productivity of forest ecosystems;

CONSIDERING that forest soils play a central role in the water cycle and its regulation both at the global and watershed scales;

CONSIDERING that forest soils with forest stands, particularly in steeply sloping areas, play a central role in the slope stability, making it possible to limit landslides and promote the regulation of the water regime;

RECOGNISING the major importance of forest soils as carbon reservoirs and sinks, thus playing an important role in mitigating climate change;

DEEPLY CONCERNED by the increasing degradation of forest soils by:

- a. deforestation or large-scale dieback causing rapid and sometimes complete degradation of soils;
- b. climate change rapidly and drastically altering soil biodiversity and therefore its functioning; and
- c. those elements greatly impacting the ecosystem services they can provide;

CONSIDERING that forest soil degradation also threatens the livelihoods, food systems and cultural identity of Indigenous peoples, local communities and smallholder farmers who depend on healthy soils; and

NOTING that awareness of the importance of these soils, although growing, is still very insufficient;

### **The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025, at its session in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates:**

#### **1. CALLS ON Members and States to:**

- a. protect, sustainably manage and restore forest soils and their biodiversity, which are key elements to forest adaptation and resilience to climate change;
- b. seek to identify, improve, restrict or prohibit forestry practices that degrade and compact the soil, minimise the impact of heavy machinery, particularly its use on sensitive sites;
- c. limit inputs and restrict or prohibit plant protection products during the renewal of forest stands, and favour biodegradable lubricants for equipment;
- d. have virtuous forestry practices, such as the establishment of and compliance with sustainable operating partitions and alternative solutions to logging by heavy machinery to limit their movement on the plots;
- e. maintain continuous plant cover, prioritising the natural regeneration of existing ecosystems by promoting their resilience capacities, where necessary, assisted restoration and active and sustainable forestry management for the adaptation of forest ecosystems to climate change; and thus contributing to the preservation of soils; and
- f. limit or avoid single-species plantations, which can be harmful to soils, in areas that naturally have a high diversity of trees;

#### **2. CALLS ON the relevant authorities to:**

- a. assess and integrate the services provided by forest soils into the establishment of regulations;
  - b. integrate the fight against forest soil degradation into forest management strategies and promote sustainable forest management;
  - c. improve training and research on forest soils and their biodiversity, and for their regular monitoring to be encouraged; and
  - d. promote national legal and policy frameworks that strengthen the protection, restoration and sustainable use of forest soils, including their integration into nationally determined contributions, the adoption of national soil laws and the creation of conditions conducive to investments aligned with positive outcomes for nature;
3. CALLS on the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management to develop, in coordination with the relevant Commissions, a practical strategy and toolkit for forest soil conservation and restoration, incorporating technical guidance, legal instruments, inclusive governance models and investment approaches.