

092 Promoting free evolution and the tools to sustain it

RECALLING, in accordance with the World Charter for Nature, the Earth Charter and the Initiative for Biosphere Ethics, the values of existence, memory and future of living things;

COMMITTED to the 15th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and the European Union Nature Restoration Law, which aim to conserve and restore 30% of land areas;

RECALLING that human activities are responsible for climate change and the erosion of biodiversity;

UNDERLINING the fundamental role of spontaneous ecological processes in carbon storage functions and in combating climate change;

RECALLING humanity's dependence on ecosystem services (food, water, security of property and people);

CONSIDERING that a free-evolving area is a place where ecological processes are spontaneous and unhindered by human activities;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that human societies have diverse representations of nature, free evolution can be understood differently from one culture to another;

UNDERLINING that free evolution constitutes an opportunity for a reaffirmation of the relationship between humans and their environment based on respect for living things;

CONSIDERING that large, freely evolving areas contain greater heterogeneity and greater genetic, species, and ecosystem diversity;

RECALLING that small, freely evolving areas in contexts of high human pressure have an important role as reservoirs of biodiversity;

NOTING that the promotion of free evolution is a tool for raising awareness of nature, through wonder as much as through science, and can contribute to improving the relationship between humans and non-humans;

RECALLING that freely evolving areas are opportunities for the development of a local economy, respectful of nature and populations; and

CONSIDERING that human societies have different worldviews and ways of understanding nature and its multiple values, and that Indigenous peoples and traditional communities have inhabited and governed their territories with full respect for nature, free evolution must be interpreted as including and respecting these worldviews in which nature and humans are not separate but mutually interdependent;

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

1. CALLS ON the Director General and the Commissions to develop guidelines for the international recognition of free evolution areas that respect the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities, taking into account the diversity of local circumstances;

2. INVITES IUCN Members to:

- a. propose free evolution as a management principle in all types of areas;
- a. *bis.* ensure that areas of free evolution are identified, managed and/or protected only in accordance with Indigenous and traditional territories and governance systems that have allowed nature to thrive;
- b. grant protected status and/or recognition to freely evolving areas, subject to adequate safeguards;

c. implement awareness-raising actions among a wide range of audiences in order to initiate a change in the way they perceive and respect the guardians of nature and nature in its free evolution; and

d. encourage governance synergies between free-evolving areas and Indigenous and traditional systems and surrounding territories, as well as overlapping areas and territories, in order to support the joint benefits between natural processes and environmental management for human activities;

3. ASKS States and communities to:

a. encourage participatory identification processes that are freely evolving;

b. consider, after scientific advice and in collaboration with the managers and traditional authorities in these areas, any operation likely to accelerate the restoration of ecological processes;

c. support domestic and urban uses that allow the development of spontaneous nature in the immediate vicinity of human societies; and

d. encourage all economic co-development initiatives based on the promotion, knowledge and respect of wilderness and its guardians, which would contribute to creating new socio-economic opportunities for local communities.