

001 Improving tree planting practices – Planting the right tree in the right place for the right purpose

DEEPLY CONCERNED by the continuous loss of native forests and species diversity and the fact that 38% of the world's tree species are listed as threatened on the IUCN Red List;

ALARMED by the increasingly large number of large-scale, short-rotation, monoculture plantations using non-native tree species, and primarily focused on tree numbers, with little attention to species, site selection or aftercare;

MINDFUL that tree planting is often portrayed as an effective mitigation for carbon emissions, whereas evidence shows that planting the wrong tree in the wrong place (e.g. in native grassland) or clearing native forests for tree monocultures can actually lead to net carbon emissions;

CONSCIOUS that forest plantations are needed to meet humanity's needs for fibre, fuel, timber and food;

AWARE of the importance of ecological forestry approaches, such as agroforestry and multipurpose forestry, as an alternative to intensive agriculture;

RECOGNISING that restoring and conserving natural forest ecosystems, particularly remaining primary and intact forests, is essential to halt the biodiversity crisis, to store carbon, and to provide resources for people;

UNDERSTANDING that there is a real opportunity to shift world reforestation efforts towards positive outcomes for forest ecosystems and the services these provide;

AWARE of the importance of global guidelines on the precautions that should be taken into account when introducing and planting non-native trees;

RECOGNISING the existence of global initiatives to bring degraded landscapes into restoration, and standards such as the ones developed by IUCN, the Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration, the Society for Ecological Restoration, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the Global Biodiversity Standard; and

NOTING the importance of the Kew Declaration, endorsed in 2021, by 422 organisations and 2612 individuals from 114 countries, calling on those who made reforestation pledges to safeguard global forest biodiversity;

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

1. CALLS on the Director General, Commissions and Members to:

a. ensure that rigorous biodiversity and social safeguards are applied to all forest restoration initiatives – including those labelled as Nature-Based Solutions and under the Bonn Challenge – placing particular emphasis on locally-led initiatives;

b. promote the use of native and threatened tree species in reforestation initiatives and highlight the risks of planting invasive, non-native species;

c. work with international bodies (e.g. the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) to differentiate between tree plantations and natural forests in reforestation projects; and

d. use a simple but scientifically robust international biodiversity certification scheme, recognising reforestation and restoration programmes that have a positive impact on biodiversity and livelihoods;

2. CALLS UPON practitioners, policy makers, foresters, businesses, researchers and donors to support or carry out tree planting initiatives that protect and enhance biodiversity, and to protect the customary tenure and access rights of indigenous peoples and local communities; and

3. ENCOURAGES them to partner with the botanical, ecological restoration, mycological, agroforestry, and wider conservation community, including holders of traditional knowledge, to adopt practices that protect, restore and enhance biodiversity, and ensure ecological integrity and connectivity.