

003 Developing a unified global definition of 'peatland and peat'

ACKNOWLEDGING that peatlands occur in almost every country on Earth and account for 33% of global terrestrial carbon deposits, and in a damaged state contribute 4% of anthropogenic carbon emissions;

RECOGNISING that peatlands are of vital importance to nature and people, providing a broad range of ecosystem services;

RECALLING that the IUCN World Conservation Congress at its session in Honolulu, Hawai'i (2016) adopted its first motion on global peatlands as Resolution 6.043 *Securing the future for global peatlands* (Hawai'i, 2016);

COGNISANT that, in the intervening period, there has been significant progress in its implementation and a recognition of the importance of peatlands conservation and restoration globally as a Nature-based Solution to climate change;

ACKNOWLEDGING the important work of the United Nations Environment Programme-led Global Peatlands Initiative, Wetlands International, Greifswald Mire Centre, International Mire Conservation Group, the IUCN UK National Committee Peatland Programme, United Nations Resolution 4/16 (2019) and others in supporting this progress;

ALSO ACKNOWLEDGING that, despite the advances in understanding and awareness, peatlands remain globally at risk and continue to contribute damaging emissions;

CONCERNED that, eight years on, adoption of definitions of 'peatland and peat' remains elusive and that without scientific consensus for a definition and sub-definitions to account for different climate zones, peatlands remain vulnerable to policy decisions based on arbitrary definitions usually based solely on depth;

RECOGNISING ALSO that varied definitions between countries may lead to highly divergent impacts on peatland ecosystem function globally;

CONCERNED that this lack of an agreed definition makes it more likely to be changed or challenged, and there are few options to counter such decisions without an international consensus definition as a basis to do so; and

CONFIDENT that the agreement on, and authoring of, an expert-led definition will constitute a vital step towards ensuring that peatlands are protected in perpetuity and will renew international focus on peatland health;

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

REQUESTS the Director General, in collaboration with the Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) to:

a. convene a panel of acknowledged peatland experts (hereafter 'Working Group') from across the Union, including governmental and non-governmental organisations representing academia and research, management and ownership interests, multilateral organisations including UNEP and FAO, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, and protected area managers, recognising the work done by, and in consultation with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands Secretariat and the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel, to develop and agree on a definition of 'peatland and peat', on the basis of which decisions can be made, taking into account the following characteristics: minimal extent; depth and accumulation rate; plant species composition and organic matter content; peat carbon content and peat bulk density; integrity of the hydrological unit (maintaining natural hydrological conditions, restoring natural water flow and blocking drainage channels in degraded peatlands etc.); nutrient levels; acidity; and water quality, taking into account the diversity of impacts on peatlands such as protection status, land use changes and inclusion in climate change strategies.

- b. impress upon National Committees the importance of cooperating with the Secretariat, Commissions, Members and the Working Group to support the development of this definition and promote its adoption within their respective countries;
- c. support the dissemination and advocacy of the agreed definition widely amongst governmental and non-governmental organisations, universities, researchers, economic stakeholders, local communities and protected area managers; and
- d. encourage the embedding of the agreed definition into relevant national and international policies and frameworks by IUCN.