

005 Protection and restoration of diverse native grasslands

CONCERNED that the Earth's ancient temperate grasslands – North American prairies, South American pampas, South African grassveld, Central European and Eurasian steppes and Himalayan temperate and alpine grasslands– have the lowest protection of Earth's 15 biomes, with less than half intact; and concerned that natural meadows and rangelands linked to ancient cultural landscapes and traditional agriculture are also threatened;

NOTING that restoring and rewilding grasslands is a long, costly and delicate undertaking;

RECALLING that natural grasslands have not undergone any chemical treatment or ploughing for several decades;

CONSIDERING that natural grasslands provide essential ecological functions, promote pollinator health and vitality and resilience for ecosystems;

CONCERNED that the disappearance and degradation of grasslands as a result of human activities and environmental changes, especially climate change, leads to habitat degradation, desertification and reduction of carbon sequestration;

CONCERNED ALSO about the decline of birds, mammals, arthropods, soil fauna and fungi for which natural grasslands are crucial habitats;

RECOGNISING that Indigenous Peoples' ecological knowledges, sciences and practices sustain temperate grasslands;

VALUING that Nature-based Solutions are crucial to sustain local agriculture and are linked to maintaining bocage networks;

VALUING the cultural heritage, spiritual, recreational and social contributions that grasslands provide as habitat for some of the world's greatest assemblages of close-to-native pre-agricultural communities and wildlife;

FURTHER NOTING that effective grassland conservation and restoration must recognize the indelible connection between ranchers, pastoralists and others with the land and be rooted in local, community-based approaches and strengthen local, collaborative partnerships;

FURTHER CONCERNED about the lack of consistent national regimes to protect grasslands, including confusion between natural wild grassland and permanent or even temporary modified rangeland, pasture, forage, turf and cereal crops;

RECOGNISING the complexity of factors that influence the conversion of grasslands, such as, but not limited to, competing land uses, urban expansion and demand for annual crops; and

APPRECIATING the innovations in restoring, rewilding and protecting grasslands by pastoralists, ranchers and other relevant stakeholders and organisations, such as American Prairie (United States of America), Rewilding Argentina and the Altyn Dala Conservation Initiative (Kazakhstan), through multijurisdictional, multistakeholder and landscape-scale conservation;

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

1. ENCOURAGES Commissions, in particular the Commission on Ecosystem Management, through the IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology, to identify and map natural grasslands to improve knowledge on the distribution, age and degree of naturalness and conservation;

2. URGES IUCN constituents to expand international cooperation to conserve mostly intact temperate grassland, including through development of ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed protected areas, other effective area-based conservation measures and privately managed lands, consistent with Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework;

3. URGES States and international organisations to facilitate capacity building and knowledge exchange for wildlife restoration on private conservation lands, to encourage landscape-scale restoration and the sustainable, collaborative management of temperate grasslands, with a specific focus on protecting climate-threatened grasslands and implementing long-term management for degraded grassland restoration;

4. URGES the provision of financial support for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, non-governmental organisations and State agencies engaged in temperate grassland restoration and conservation efforts, and

5. CALLS UPON States and grassland managers to:

a. effectively conserve and manage natural grasslands that are integrated into wider landscapes near agricultural and human activity and, where relevant, explicitly recognize the role of managed livestock grazing and other grassland management systems, such as haying and prescribed burning, as a necessary aspect of maintaining grassland habitat and protecting it from benign neglect/abandonment;

b. support local, community-based approaches and collaborative partnerships to conserve these designated grasslands from intensive agricultural practices and from agricultural abandonment;

c. develop and implement appropriate and sustainable farming management systems that maintain and enhance natural capital and that allow the maintenance of an original, varied and abundant biodiversity, and to restore the diversity and abundance in degraded grasslands by relying on reservoirs of reference natural grassland species and integrating conservation easements and corridors; and

d. strengthen protection of climate-threatened grasslands and explore insurance and other innovative financial tools to compensate restoration projects damaged by climate disasters.