

024 Declaration on the urgent preservation of high mountain wetlands in Latin America and other regions of the world

RECOGNISING the importance of high mountain wetlands and their ecosystem services, associated with water and climate regulation, disaster management, water security, sequestration and maintenance of greenhouse gases, maintenance of biological and geological diversity and its food sources, etc.;

MINDFUL that the solutions to the climate crisis promoted by the dominant energy transition, focused on the expansion of renewable energies based on the use of minerals, directly threaten the integrity and functioning of these wetlands, their biodiversity and their contributions, in addition to violating human rights and socio-environmental safeguards;

NOTING that the Convention on Wetlands calls upon the Parties to increase investment, where possible at the national level, in the protection of wetlands, including through regulatory and legislative measures, and to address the lack of information on their ecological characteristics in order to give priority to such protection;

UNDERLINING the role of local and Indigenous communities in the management and conservation of high mountain wetlands and the need to recognise their value in participatory and knowledge exchange spaces with an intercultural and gender perspective and to respect the right to free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous communities;

CONSIDERING the lack of financing from the public and private sectors and from international financial entities that allow scaling up, spatially and temporally, the scope of actions for the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of high mountain wetlands based on the promotion of nature-based solutions and the development of hybrid infrastructure (natural infrastructure and grey infrastructure) for the conservation, protection and sustainable use of these ecosystems;

KNOWING that high mountain wetlands are generated and conditioned by geodiversity and its geological processes and that they all form part of the geological heritage, as they are places of geological interest for scientific, educational and/or tourist purposes, which need to be known and conserved; and

CONSIDERING that high mountain wetlands have been used by humans since time immemorial, which has generated traditional uses and knowledge of geodiversity and biodiversity (ancient spas, extraction of minerals such as salt, fishing practices, spiritual traditions, means of transport, and housing, etc.), which urgently need to be conserved and promoted, so that the memory of Indigenous peoples and Local communities is not lost;

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

1. URGES the Director General to call upon governments, the private sector and international organisations (international cooperation, multilateral banking and others) to consider the fragility of high mountain wetlands and to adopt actions for their conservation, sustainable management and restoration; and

2. CALLS ON States, the private sector and international organisations to:

a. conserve, sustainably manage and restore high mountain wetlands, involving local and indigenous communities;

b. recognise in their policies the ecological, hydrological, social, cultural and economic value of these ecosystems;

- c. establish legal protection for high mountain wetlands and promote nature-based solutions, complementing natural and grey infrastructure and respecting human rights;
- d. ensure investments for the enhancement and conservation of these ecosystems;
- e. implement economic and fiscal incentives for the protection of high mountain wetlands, ensuring the participation, consultation and consent of local and Indigenous communities;
- f. identify and close regulatory gaps to ensure the sustainable management of these ecosystems;
- g. urge cooperation, multilateral banks and international organisations to promote joint agendas for the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of these ecosystems with full respect for human rights, in the face of pressures such as mining, urbanisation, agriculture, aquaculture, illegal and informal economies and other anthropogenic pressures;
- h. generate scientific and technical knowledge about the geodiversity and geological processes of high mountain wetlands, which will lead to the mitigation of their present and future environmental problems; and
- i. support inventories of sites of geological interest and traditional uses and knowledge of the geodiversity and biodiversity of high mountain wetlands. To sustainably promote the value of wetlands for scientific, educational and/or tourism purposes in order to raise awareness of their protection and prevent the loss of the cultural heritage of wetlands.