

054 Operationalising the rights of nature and evaluating their implementation in territories¹

CONSIDERING the growing number of governments worldwide committed to reversing natural habitat degradation and biodiversity loss – and that of geodiversity – by recognising and asserting the intrinsic rights of nature;

RECALLING that several States and territories have already recognised the rights of nature, with different legal forms, be it in their Constitution or in their national legislation;

WELCOMING the most recent progress made by the international community, in particular the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in 2022, which explicitly acknowledges for those countries that recognise “the rights of nature and the rights of Mother Earth”, as fundamental levers for the successful implementation of conservation;

RECALLING the language adopted in the Kunming-Montréal Biodiversity Framework, Section C, Paragraph 8, which states that, “nothing in this framework may be construed as diminishing or extinguishing the rights that indigenous peoples currently have or may acquire in the future”;

ALSO RECALLING that the right to free, prior and informed consent is also affirmed in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and would apply to all the programmes designed and implemented in relation to the rights of nature;

CONSIDERING that protected areas are one of the most effective tools for preserving biodiversity and geodiversity against growing anthropogenic pressures whilst ensuring the resilience and adaptive capacity of ecosystems;

CONVINCED that the operationalisation of the rights of nature, particularly in protected areas and sites included in the IUCN Green List, can promote sustainable reconciliation between humanity and nature, revive civic awareness, and help reduce the vulnerability of territories to the effects of climate change;

RECALLING the principles of the Ethical Manifesto of the French Committee of IUCN, based on the World Charter for Nature, the Earth Charter, and the Biosphere Ethics Initiative, which calls for a rethinking of our relationships with the living beings and with the Earth; and

ALIGNING with previous IUCN Resolutions, in particular Resolution 5.100 *Incorporation of the Rights of Nature as the organizational focal point in IUCN's decision making* (Jeju, 2012);

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

1. ASKS States to carefully examine the concept of the rights of nature, their potential implications including on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, as well as other rights holders, in accordance with human rights law;
2. INVITES national, local and sub-national governments to recognise the rights of nature in the diversity of legal and cultural approaches;
3. INVITES the national, local and sub-national governments that recognise the rights of nature to:
 - a. promote their concrete implementation in territories, particularly within protected areas and sites on the IUCN Green List;
 - b. plan human activities in coherence with the rights of nature, ensuring respect for ecological limits and promoting ecosystem regeneration;

¹ Considering that territories are geographically identified ecological, social, cultural and legal living spaces where interdependencies between human beings and other components of the living world are expressed, including Indigenous and traditional territories.

c. guarantee spaces for environmental democracy, enabling Indigenous Peoples, civil society and local communities, including other stakeholders, to participate actively in the processes of operationalizing Nature, in order to defend fundamental ecological interests, thereby recognising their essential role as stewards of the living world and holders of ecological knowledge; and

d. fully involve Indigenous peoples and Local communities, with their free, prior and informed consent, in their Indigenous and traditional territories, recognising their essential role as stewards of the living world and holders of ecological knowledge;

4. ASKS IUCN to:

a. continue legal reflections on the regimes for recognising natural entities as subjects of law, and promote innovative frameworks aligned with the principles of the rights of nature;

b. launch experiments in a network of pilot sites, particularly within protected areas, in order to observe the effects of recognising the rights of nature; and

c. encourage the documentation and promotion of inspiring local and international initiatives where the rights of nature are already recognised or are in the process of being recognised; and

5. ASKS the World Commission on Protected Areas and the World Commission on Environmental Law to:

a. coordinate a rigorous assessment of the impact of these experiments on biodiversity conservation, the living conditions of local communities and the associated forms of governance; and

b. develop a replicable toolkit, based on lessons learned from these experiences, to support actors in the practical implementation of the rights of nature in various contexts.