

072 Recognising the Model Forest Act to enhance forest protection, conservation, restoration and sustainable management of forests

RECOGNISING that forests are among the most biologically diverse ecosystems on Earth, providing critical support for the world's flora, fauna and fungi, as well as for the cultural, economic, environmental and social foundations of human societies;

ALARMED by continuing deforestation and forest degradation, especially in primary forests, which endangers the future health and well-being of humankind and threatens the existence of innumerable species;

MINDFUL of the urgency of addressing global climate change and the need to rapidly reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation;

UNDERSTANDING that economic and social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable forest management;

RECALLING the values and commitments reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 13 (Climate Action), 15 (Life on Land), 16 (Peace, Justice and strong Institutions), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals);

RECOGNISING ALSO the importance of fundamental principles of human rights, including the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as a foundation for environmental governance;

FURTHER RECALLING Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) to effectively conserve and manage at least 30% of terrestrial areas by 2030, as well as Targets 1, 2 and 10, which also directly relate to actions to conserve, restore and sustainably use forest ecosystems;

AFFIRMING the United Nations Forest Instrument (2016), which recognises the multiple benefits of forests and their contribution to sustainable development and poverty eradication;

FURTHER RECOGNISING the importance of the rule of law in forest protection and management;

RECOGNISING MOREOVER that sustainable forest governance must contribute to improving livelihoods, promoting social equity, and strengthening the resilience of forest-dependent communities, particularly those in vulnerable situations;

NOTING the legal disconnect between outdated forest legal frameworks and modern environmental principles and scientific advancements; and

ACKNOWLEDGING the work of the IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL) Model Forest Act Task Force in its creation of the Model Forest Act (MFA);

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

1. WELCOMES the development of the MFA as an innovative blueprint for policymakers and other stakeholders in designing modern legal frameworks for forest governance;
2. ENDORSES the MFA's interdisciplinary, multi-stakeholder and evidence-informed approach to designing model legislative text that can be applied and tailored to country-specific contexts and ENCOURAGES ongoing consultations with relevant stakeholders to enable input during its drafting;
3. REQUESTS the Director General to facilitate knowledge sharing and capacity-building related to the MFA among IUCN networks;
4. REQUESTS the IUCN Council to provide support for the dissemination and promotion of the MFA, once agreed, following appropriate consultations;

5. REQUESTS WCEL to study the implementation and effectiveness of the MFA in various national contexts, including a specific analysis of environmental human rights and participatory mechanisms;
6. ENCOURAGES all States including those with dryland forest, mangrove and other native vegetation, to consider adopting or adapting the MFA, once agreed, in their national legal systems, to strengthen forest protection, conservation, restoration and sustainable management;
7. CALLS ON States to ensure that their forest governance frameworks address emerging challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss and water insecurity, while keeping pace with scientific and technological advancements, and develop transparent and inclusive institutional mechanisms for coordination, monitoring and enforcement, ensuring the effective participation of Indigenous peoples and Local communities;
8. URGES States to incorporate key principles of the MFA, as appropriate, including the intrinsic value of forests and ecosystem-based approaches, consistent with international human rights law, including the rights of Indigenous peoples and Local communities; and
9. ENCOURAGES States to ensure that the implementation of the Model Forest Act promotes inclusive and sustainable economic models that strengthen local economies, respect labour rights, and generate equitable benefits for forest-dependent communities.