

097 Mainstreaming mentorship for young ecological stewards to enhance conservation efforts

NOTING WITH CONCERN that the triple planetary crisis requires urgent transformative and inclusive approaches to conservation and that young people represent a vital and often untapped resource of creativity and leadership in ecological stewardship, including Indigenous youth whose knowledge systems and cultural practices contribute uniquely to conservation.

RECOGNISING that the theme of the World Conservation Congress 2025 acknowledges the importance of supporting youth-led initiatives as a cornerstone of transformative change in conservation, emphasising the need to prepare the next generation to lead through bold, inclusive leadership and innovative solutions.

APPRECIATING that this initiative builds on the safeguards adopted under Resolution 4 *Mainstreaming Mentorship of Young Ecological Stewards* of the 12th World Wilderness Congress (WILD12), calling for investment in the young generation of ecological stewards, to ensure the long-term sustainability of restoration, protection and conservation of nature efforts.

RECOGNISING the significant barriers that young ecological stewards face in accessing mentorship, resources and opportunities to build capacity and influence conservation outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGING that this motion builds upon the principles established in Resolution 7.062 *Role of children and youth in nature conservation* (Marseille, 2020), which highlighted the critical need to enhance youth engagement in conservation by creating supportive environments and opportunities for young people to contribute meaningfully to global biodiversity efforts.

WELCOMING the IUCN 2022–2030 Youth Strategy's commitment to empowering youth and enhancing their role in conservation and sustainable development.

UNDERLINING that full and meaningful involvement of youth is crucial for the implementation of global environmental agreements; and the importance of delivering mentorship in local and Indigenous languages to ensure accessibility for youth who do not use IUCN's official languages.

EMPHASISING that mentorship fosters intergenerational collaboration and two-way learning, builds community resilience and supports the continuity of conservation knowledge and practices across generations.

RECOGNISING that young ecological stewards who take on roles as environmental defenders may face serious personal risks and thus require mentorship models that include elements of protection, safety and emotional support.

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

1. CALLS ON the Director General to advocate for the inclusion of mentorship for youth, with particular attention to Indigenous youth, and the training of staff members to become effective mentors as integral components of the strategies of IUCN Members and partner organisations, and REQUESTS that the IUCN Secretariat, Commissions and Members promote and support mentorship initiatives that are inclusive and equitable; and to seek partnerships with technology companies to co-develop mentorship platforms and tools adapted to low-connectivity environments and local realities.
2. CALLS ON IUCN Commissions, in particular the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP) and the Commission on Education and Communication (CEC), to co-create a guidance document or framework for effective intergenerational mentorship and partnership, grounded in principles of equity, reciprocity, and locally relevant knowledge systems.
3. URGES Member organisations, governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academic institutions and the private sector to mainstream mentorship of young ecological stewards as a key component of their strategies concerning the sustainability of their conservation programmes.

4. ENCOURAGES member organisations, governments, NGOs and academic institutions to advocate for funding institutions to provide incentives to entities that incorporate mentorship strategies, particularly those pairing experienced conservation professionals with young leaders and supporting underrepresented groups.

5. INVITES Member organisations to report on successful mentorship models and share best practices through IUCN events and publications, contributing to a global community of practice focused on youth empowerment in conservation.

6. APPEALS TO funding bodies and donor organisations to prioritise mentorship initiatives in their funding strategies, recognising the long-term benefits of investing in the next generation of conservation leaders.