

105 Recognise and support community stewardship of natural resources through dedicated funding

RECOGNISING that functioning ecosystems are essential for maintaining life on Earth and that many rural, tribal and Indigenous communities have successfully stewarded these ecosystems for generations through their place-based knowledge and practices;

RECALLING that lands and waters conserved by Indigenous peoples and Local communities (IPLCs) contain an estimated 80% of the planet's biodiversity, and that IPLCs own or govern at least 32% of global land and related inland waters;

ACKNOWLEDGING that these communities often face economic pressures and development challenges that may compromise their ability to continue their place-based stewardship practices;

NOTING that current global funding for biodiversity conservation is estimated at only US\$ 124–143 billion per year against required annual funding of US\$ 722–967 billion, and that a significant portion of this funding gap affects areas historically managed by local communities;

CONCERNED that the lack of sustainable financing mechanisms for community-based conservation threatens both biodiversity and the cultural practices that have helped preserve it;

RECOGNISING that rewarding and supporting community stewardship practices can be a cost-effective, resilient and just approach to respond to the impacts of climate change, while simultaneously supporting sustainable livelihoods and local food systems; and

RECALLING IUCN Resolution 6.030 *Recognising and respecting the territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities (ICCAs) overlapped by protected areas* (Hawai'i, 2016) and Resolution 19.23 *The Importance of Community-based Approaches* (Buenos Aires, 1994);

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

1. REQUESTS the Director General to facilitate and advise IUCN State Members to establish a dedicated Community Stewardship Fund designed to provide financial support to communities to sustain and expand their place-based stewardship actions for continued biodiversity and ecosystem services;
2. URGES IUCN State Members to recognise and legally protect the rights of communities to continue their place-based practices, and develop national policies and programmes that support and incentivise community-based natural resource management;
3. REQUESTS IUCN Members to document and share:
 - a. evidence of successful and undermined community stewardship practices, to ensure mainstreaming of the Fund in National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and to provide technical support to communities;
 - b. collaborative national and multinational projects that empower the role of IPLCs in community based-conservation with particular regard to other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs);
4. CALLS UPON IUCN Members to ensure effective support and recognition of place-based governance systems for natural resource management through use of the fund and ensure full and effective participation of Indigenous peoples and Local communities, and co-create participatory frameworks to monitor socio-ecological outcomes;
5. CALLS ON the financial sector, bilateral and multilateral donors to allocate dedicated funding streams that are accessible to communities through their relevant local governance structures; and

6. CALLS FOR the establishment of a working group comprising representatives from IPLCs, IUCN Commissions, and relevant experts to oversee the development and implementation of the Community Stewardship Fund and ensure that funding mechanisms align with community needs and values.