

138 Recognising unequivocally and effectively supporting the crucial conservation role of territories of life and their custodians

ACKNOWLEDGING that territories of life comprise the lands, waters and gifts of nature collectively governed, managed and conserved by their custodians Indigenous peoples and Local communities and Afro-descendant populations, settled and mobile, who have multiple and historically interactive bonds with their territories – knowledge, labour, sustenance, identity, arts, culture, economy, defence, sacrifice, responsibility and ongoing care;

ACKNOWLEDGING that territories of life provide ecological and climate regulation functions for all and that when adequately recognised and supported, they can support the fulfilment of targets 1, 2 and 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF);

AWARE that the biological diversity of territories of life is linked to the continued livelihoods of their custodians and to the diversity of their languages, cultures and living knowledge systems, essential for sustainable use and restoration;

AWARE that territories of life are governed under diverse sociopolitical arrangements, from indigenous customary rights to traditional common property, sacred sites or collective property;

AWARE that territories of life are often affected and degraded by unsustainable development policies, aggressive extractive practices, agro-industry, urbanism, socio-economic inequality, and ecological and cultural changes;

CELEBRATING the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) 2007 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants (UNDROP) 2018, and the obligations of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the creation of the subsidiary body on article 8j, the Programme of Work on Protected Areas and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework;

RECOGNISING the efforts of the Parties to the CBD to implement the CBD Decisions and the recommendations of the IUCN World Parks Congresses regarding diversity, quality and vitality of governance, and indigenous and traditional cultures;

BUILDING UPON the various IUCN Resolutions on Indigenous peoples and Local communities in conservation adopted previously and frequently implemented in a limited manner;

CONSIDERING that geodiversity is part of nature and that many of its sites of geological interest have always fascinated human beings, and that there is a culture based on their traditional use that has been forged since the dawn of humanity by Indigenous peoples and Local communities; and

CAUTIONING that there is an imminent risk of this popular heritage being forgotten by future generations, among other reasons due to the loss of elderly people who master the traditional uses and knowledge of geodiversity, which could also lead to the destruction of their geological sites and the cultural heritage they have generated;

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

URGES the Director General to activate a working group among its Members, Commissions, Secretariat and autonomous custodian organisations to:

a. begin a process of ‘truth and reconciliation’ about the historical and present dynamics that impact territories of life and their custodians and their irreplaceable role in ensuring that future generations inherit a diverse, just and habitable world;

b. identify and share forms of restorative justice for custodians to maintain or resume their collective rights and responsibilities to govern and conserve their territories of life in ways appropriate to their cultures; and

c. assist the Parties to the CBD, the Global Environment Facility and related international agencies to:

i. encourage the recognition of territories of life both within and outside national protected area systems and other effective area-based conservation measures, and Indigenous and traditional territories as a sui generis 'third way' and spaces for sustainable self-determination, guided by the principle of free, prior and informed consent, as appropriate as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

ii. protect territories of life from exploitative and extractive activities (Target 14 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework);

iii. support networks of custodians to facilitate and channel support (funds, but not only);

iv. support conservation actors and consultative processes with national authorities in each region to increase their capacities and improve their policies and practices for the adequate recognition and support of territories of life as a new differentiated category of Indigenous territories and the diversity of cultures and living knowledge of their custodians; and

v. take measures to identify, inventory, preserve and enhance the value of traditional knowledge, practices, crafts and sites related to geodiversity and biodiversity, supporting their conservation as part of the natural and cultural heritage and encouraging the transmission of this human wisdom among generations of Indigenous and local communities, so that the memory of knowing how to live in harmony with nature is not lost.