

147 Protecting ecosystems and riverine communities from the impacts of hydropower in the Lower Congo and globally

ACKNOWLEDGING Resolution 7.134 *Protecting the Lower Congo River from large hydro-electric dam developments* (Marseille, 2020);

RECALLING that Resolution 7.134 resulted in the development of an IUCN SSC-WCPA Dams Inter-Commission to consolidate World Commission on Dams (WCD) recommendations into a contemporary framework of good practice and to oversee their strategic implementation;

CONCERNED by the World Bank's renewed financing of major hydropower projects, exemplified by its recent approval of the Inga 3 Dam in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) despite major governance, environmental and social risks;

NOTING that while increasing electricity generation in the DRC is crucial to address the approximately 80% of the population lacking access, the electricity produced by the Inga 3 Dam would be primarily intended for mining operations and export;

NOTING with concern that the proposed development of the Inga 3 Dam may significantly reduce river flow, cause substantial biodiversity loss and adversely affect the ecological integrity of the Lower Congo, including the marine Congo Canyon and the Congo plume ecosystem;

ACKNOWLEDGING that in July 2025 African and Congolese community and non-governmental organisations issued a statement urging the World Bank to reconsider financing the Inga 3 Dam, citing threats to ecosystems, biodiversity and the potential displacement of tens of thousands of people;

RECALLING that although the WCD's 2000 report established seven strategic priorities and policy principles, the inadequate implementation of these continues to place river-dependent communities at risk; and

CONCERNED that large dams are promoted as "green" while causing significant environmental and social impacts particularly when more sustainable and socially equitable energy alternatives exist;

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

1. CALLS ON the Director General to transmit a formal memorandum to the DRC President requesting that he:

a. only consider developing the Inga 3 Dam project as an outcome of a transparent, participatory and comprehensive review of environmental and social impacts and electricity generation options; and

b. develop and prioritise electricity generation plans consistent with the principles of environmental sustainability and the protection of human rights;

2. CALLS ON the Director General to submit an open letter to the World Bank President requesting the Bank to:

a. reconsider its renewed support for large hydropower projects, including the Inga 3 Dam, given their well-documented social, environmental, and financial risks;

b. recognise that hydropower entails significant climate and environmental impacts, thereby undermining its characterisation as "green" energy; and

c. fully consult Inga-affected communities, safeguard their livelihoods and ensure that community rights are fully respected;

3. CALLS ON the World Commissions on Protected Areas and Environmental Law to identify critical gaps in protected area coverage across the Congo Basin and explore opportunities to encourage the application of relevant legal instruments, including the rights of rivers; and
4. CALLS ON the SSC-WCPA Dams Inter-Commission to encourage the World Bank to align its policies and financing decisions with the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams and consider its integration in current and future projects.