



The Abu Dhabi Call for Global Species Conservation Action

We, the more than 300 species conservation experts at the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Species Survival Commission Leaders' Meeting in Abu Dhabi, 6-9 October 2019, call for urgent and effective action to address the unprecedented, unsustainable and growing impacts on wild species from human activities.

Why Are Species Important?

The millions of species on land, in freshwater, and in the ocean have evolved over millennia and form the web of life that sustains the planet. Species and their populations are the building blocks of ecosystems, individually and collectively securing the conditions for life. They provide food, medicine and raw materials. They are the basis of soil formation, decomposition, water filtration and flow, pollination, pest control and climate regulation. They are the primary source of income and resources for hundreds of millions of people around the globe. Species are an essential part of the history, culture, tradition and folklore of every culture on Earth and their aesthetic values and spiritual roles provide comfort and inspiration as well as recreation.

The alarm has been raised repeatedly about the decline in biodiversity across the planet. By allowing this decline to continue, we erode the very foundations of our traditions, economies, livelihoods, food security, health, and even the existence of life worldwide.

The world's people must accept responsibility for this emergency and act now to ensure we pass on a rich natural heritage to future generations.

Who We Are

The IUCN Species Survival Commission is the world's largest network of species conservation experts with over 9,000 members globally. It is mandated by the Members of IUCN (governments, NGOs, and indigenous peoples' organisations) to conserve species. This unique body of biologists, ecologists, wildlife managers, health and social scientists, educators, community representatives, economists and government officials is passionate in its commitment to "A just world that values and conserves nature". We devote our lives, generally on an entirely voluntary basis, to saving species. We echo the voices of countless concerned people from every corner of the planet.

We support institutions, communities and the private and public sectors around the world to make a positive difference to the species with which we share our planet. We do this by generating and providing knowledge, tools, and guidance on how to best conserve them.

Conservation action works. Many species have been saved from extinction. Through sharing experience and expertise we can scale up success for species survival.

The Species Emergency

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ reveals that a quarter of all species face high risk of extinction. Human activity has severely altered more than 75% of the Earth's land and freshwater areas, and 66% of the oceans. Climate change and political instability are exacerbating this crisis at all levels. Species loss at current rates will eliminate the vital ecological, economic and cultural roles that they fulfil. The crisis goes beyond species loss; human pressures mean that a vast array of species are experiencing dramatic population declines (often irreversible) to a level that affects their future and our resource base. It is beyond question that the current way of life is unsustainable and transformational change is vital.

Why Now? The 2020 Moment

The decisions taken by policy makers in 2020 will be critical for the future of the planet. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Paris Agreement on Climate Change will be reviewed, and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework will be adopted. A new UN legal binding agreement on marine biodiversity in the High Seas is under negotiation. The IUCN World Conservation Congress and the United Nations Heads of State Summit on Biodiversity will meet. This is a unique opportunity to mobilise society and galvanise the necessary action to address the species emergency.

The Call for Species Conservation Action

The global community must recognise the irreplaceable and vital role of species and their populations and massively scale up efforts to conserve all species; to ensure that their use is sustainable, and that their benefits are equitably shared.

We call for global action based on optimism, shared responsibility, commitment and collaboration to guarantee the survival of all species sharing this planet.

We call on the world's governments and international agencies to:

- Commit to clear and ambitious targets on species conservation in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, supported by an ambitious Programme of Work on Species Conservation.
- By 2030, halt species' population declines and prevent human-driven extinctions, and by 2050 improve and ensure the recovery of all threatened species.
- Fulfil species' conservation commitments through the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, Convention on Biological Diversity, the other two 'Rio' and biodiversity-related conventions;
- Take urgent action to establish, protect and effectively manage protected and conserved areas and other areas critical for the conservation of species, in particular Key Biodiversity Areas
- Recognise the scale of transformational change needed and mainstream species into national and regional development planning, including spatial plans for land, freshwater, and the ocean;
- Ensure that globalisation and trade agreements do not further threaten species or their populations, and instead support sustainable use and species recovery;
- Respect the linkages between many rural people and sustainable use of wild living resources and their contribution to conservation, livelihoods and the UN Sustainable Development Goals;
- Remove harmful subsidies that lead to depletion, destruction and degradation of species and habitats on land, in freshwater and the ocean including through agriculture and fishing; and
- Establish and strengthen policy, legal and institutional frameworks for species conservation and sustainable use that are transparent and accountable.

We call on governments, donor institutions and civil society to:

- Take emergency measures to save those species at the highest risk of extinction
- Tackle key threats that are driving species' population declines and extinctions: lack of incentives for landowners and managers to retain wild species and natural habitats; poor or abusive practices in agriculture, fisheries, and forestry; wildlife crime; emerging infectious diseases; the disruption of water flow; inadequate management of waste and discharges; invasive alien species; and increasingly, climate change and ocean acidification.

We call on local, national and global donor and financial institutions to increase massively the resources invested in conservation and sustainable use of species and their habitats.

We call on the private sector to set, implement and monitor ambitious commitments to minimise their impact on species, populations and habitats throughout the supply chain.

We call on governments, investors and financial institutions to acknowledge the link between the nature risk and financial risk, and ensure that financial flows do not degrade species and their habitats. All development project financing must be based on safeguards that prevent such investments from harming threatened species.

We call on the philanthropic community to provide increase substantially direct support for species conservation.

We call on the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and other biodiversity-related conventions to establish a Programme of Work on Species Conservation to galvanise species conservation action through the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

We call on zoos, botanical gardens and aquariums to scale up their commitment to species conservation.

Finally, we call on all people, especially young people to make a stand and speak up for all species.

Our Pledge

We, the members of IUCN Species Survival Commission, reaffirm our commitment to saving species and their populations. We pledge to step up our efforts and engage with all stakeholders. We will strive for a sustainable future for people in a world in which species are highly valued for their intrinsic worth as well as the benefits they provide. We commit to providing knowledge and implementing action for species conservation. We pledge to bequeath the wonderful diversity of species to future generations.