



IUCN World Conservation Congress **Forum and Summit highlights**

Marseille Chanot, France
3 – 7 September 2021





IUCN
WORLD CONSERVATION
CONGRESS *Marseille*

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UICN
CONGRÈS
MONDIAL DE LA
NATURE
Marseille

7 High-level Summits

250+ Forum sessions

organised across three formats (on-site, hybrid and virtual)

150+ e-posters

500+ Exhibition events

Overview

The IUCN World Conservation Congress Forum (4 - 7 September 2021) was a landmark event in a hybrid format, convened under challenging circumstances as a result of the ongoing COVID pandemic. This report includes highlights from the four-day Forum, as well as the series of summits, which took place on 3 September 2021, the day of the Congress opening.

(From Left to Right) Barbara Pompili, Kyriákos Mitsotákis, President Emmanuel Macron, Charles Michels and Harrison Ford at the opening ceremony of the IUCN World Conservation Congress, Marseille Chanot, 3 September 2021.



Newly-elected IUCN President Razan Al Mubarak held one her first meetings at the Youth Oasis

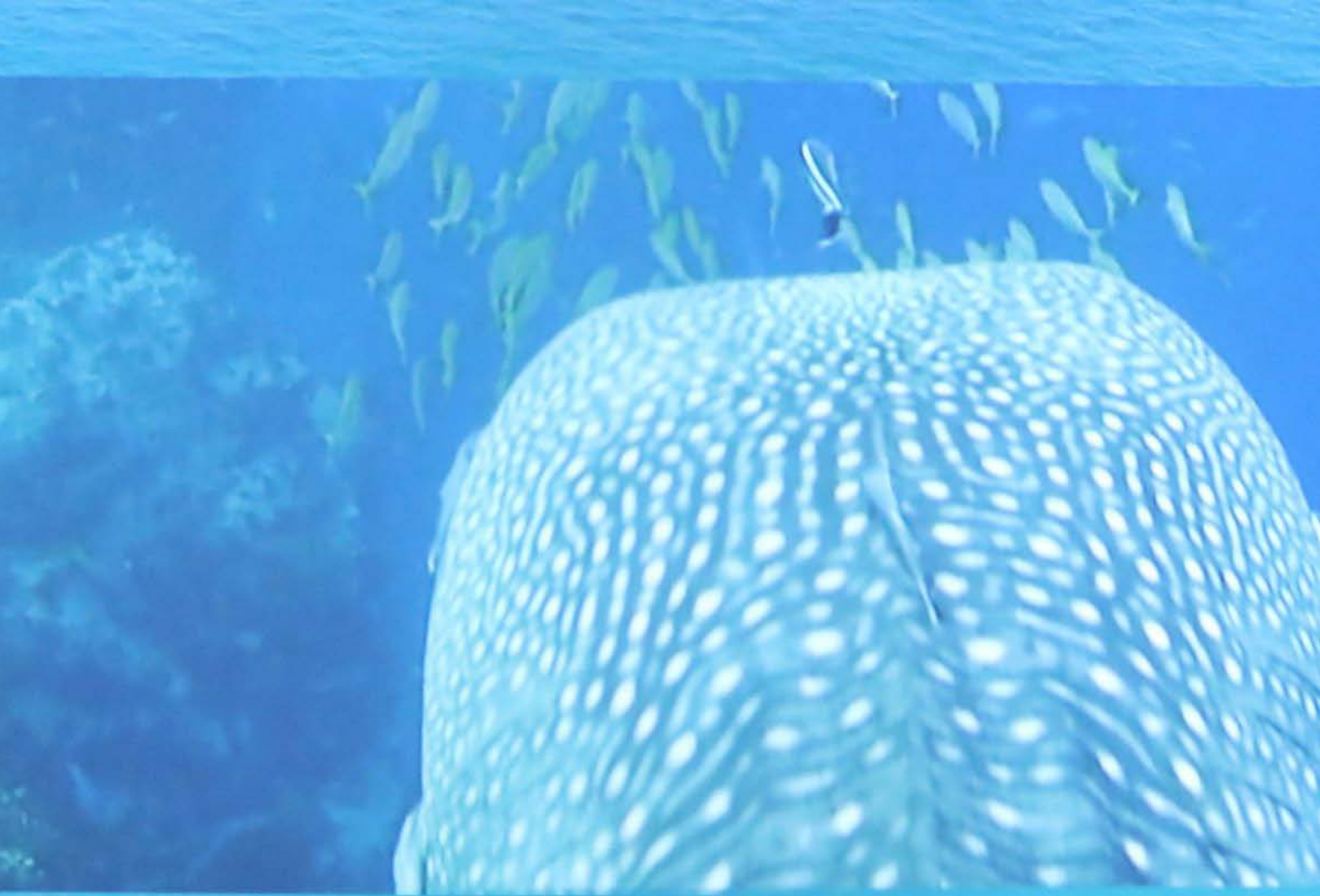


Forum high level messages

Highlights of a rich and broad dialogue that set a new bar for global ambition on what is possible in the post-pandemic recovery period:

- 1. At least 10% of the total global recovery investments should protect and restore nature, and the remainder must do no additional harm, recalling that 55% of the world's GDP depends on nature.**
- 2. Collaboration and partnerships are key for the delivery of high ambition outcomes** for nature, climate and recovery from the pandemic.
- 3. We will not achieve our nature-positive, carbon-neutral objectives for 2030 and 2050 without inclusion, social justice and empowerment of previously marginalized groups.** Indigenous people, youth and women are already working on the front-lines of system change in ways that continue to elude the mainstream. For example, indigenous peoples are acknowledged to be more effective stewards of protected areas. Their worldview holds the living world to be a system of inter-relatedness. In this view there is no separation between the biodiversity and the climate agendas.
- 4. Youth cannot be expected to lead change if we continue to keep them at the margins of decision-making;** they comprise one-fifth of the world's population, yet youth movements report they suffer from tokenism and a lack of respect. Strengthening engagement with youth and actively working to move away from tokenism in concrete, tangible ways is paramount to ensuring meaningful inclusion and participation of youth in key decision-making spaces.
- 5. The private sector has a role as a partner in the goal of a nature positive future,** both via investments and via a whole of society approach to transform our economic system and its current perverse system of subsidies and incentives that promote harmful outcomes to nature.
- 6. Climate and biodiversity must be addressed as an integrated whole** in policy and in all decision making.
- 7. Freshwater is getting more attention, but not fast enough: freshwater biodiversity is in sharp decline and wetlands are disappearing three times faster than forests. The post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework needs clearer guidance on how to apply goals and targets to freshwater ecosystems.**
- 8. Technology is not a silver bullet, and must be designed with user needs and clear conservation goals in mind to be effective.**

The key messages from the Forum were reflected in the final declaration of the IUCN World Conservation Congress: the [Marseille Manifesto](#).



Key thematic takeaways

The Forum was organised into [seven thematic areas](#).

The findings below are the summary of the key messages as reported by each Theme Leader at the Closing Ceremony of the Forum on 7 September 2021.

Managing landscapes for nature and people

In the **landscapes** theme, participants discussed the importance of worldviews that situate people within nature. Participants agreed that while connections to nature are shared by many local communities, such connections must be maintained, and may need to be revived, for the more than fifty percent of the global population living in urban areas. They also discussed the need for more ambitious pledges and more financing for conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of nature and the need for clarity about what investments are truly sustainable.

Participants noted that to attract private investors, a more thorough valuation of nature-based solutions and innovative ways to link benefits of NbS to landscape actors who maintain them, is required. Participants further considered the importance of sustainably managing nature in long-inhabited landscapes. In order to considerably increase the area of land in protected areas, a significant change in partnership with the people who call that land home and who carve out a living from it is also needed, as well as a better understanding of the conservation value of sustainable farming and grazing practices and other uses.

Conserving freshwater to sustain life

On **freshwater**, participants welcome the increased visibility of water within the draft post-2020 global biodiversity framework, while regretting that water remains missing as a topic of equal importance to land and oceans. They cautioned that this sends the message that water is less important to humanity and biodiversity. Participants called on governments to place freshwater equally with land and oceans within the global biodiversity framework. Participants emphasised that we must value, retain and restore geographical connectivity between our freshwater ecosystems. They reminded us that protecting freshwater systems is critically important for people, ecosystems, our economic needs, and our ability to adapt to climate change. They further noted that we must reconnect our consciousness to water and remember that biodiversity supports freshwater systems that deliver the water we need. Participants called for new tools, approaches and laws for the protection and restoration of freshwater systems. They cautioned that freshwater biodiversity is in freefall, with wetlands being lost at three times the rate of tropical forests, and freshwater vertebrate populations declining at twice the rate of other vertebrates. Given that freshwater habitats hold a significant proportion of global biodiversity this represents the greatest and fastest loss of biodiversity on the planet.



Restoring ocean health

Key points that were emphasised during the **report back from the oceans** theme leader included the need to adopt a robust, ambitious and future-proof internationally legally binding treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in the High Seas. Participants supported the 30×30 target in the CBD's post-2020 framework — to protect and conserve at least 30% of the ocean by 2030. They also discussed the potential for a global agreement on plastic waste and argued that ocean-related nature-based solutions should be embedded into climate finance and nationally determined contributions (NDCs). Participants discussed the verifiable management of sustainable fisheries, supported an end to overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and the use of destructive fishing methods, and agreed on action to end all exemptions and subsidies which are harmful to nature. They highlighted the need to include local coastal communities, indigenous peoples and small-scale fishers & fish-workers in all fisheries management efforts. They suggested that the UN Ocean Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development should be leveraged to foster connections between international conferences and that the implementation of the International Marine Protected Areas Network Agenda (IMPANA) should be promoted. Finally, participants welcomed President Macron's announcement of a One Ocean Summit, to be held at the end of 2021 or start of 2022, in France.



Accelerating climate change mitigation and adaptation

In the **climate change** theme, there was agreement that climate change is happening here and now and is affecting everyone – humans and biodiversity alike. Participants noted a much greater appreciation that the climate and biodiversity crises are integrated challenges that must be tackled in a holistic integrated manner. They pointed out that this calls for ambitious global emission cuts across all sectors but also highlighted the need for greater adaptation and social justice. They further noted an increased recognition that nature-based solutions have a central role to play, given their contribution to both mitigation and adaptation and that greater funding is needed in these areas, which represent 30% of the solution but only 3% of current climate financing. Participants pointed out that NbS need to happen in the context of deep decarbonisation of the global economy, and that their implementation needs to happen in a responsible manner to avoid any negative impacts on biodiversity or Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Participants agreed that tackling the climate and biodiversity crises needs a ‘whole of society’ approach, in which the global conservation community convened through IUCN can play a vital part.

Leveraging economic and financial systems for sustainability

In the **economics and finance for sustainability** theme, participants learned that the key problem is systemic: we do not invest enough in conservation; rather we use and degrade nature. Fixing this requires a systemic change. To achieve this change, participants highlighted the need for a nature-positive economy, which includes creating investments and incentives across all sectors of the economy that are positive towards nature. Participants agreed that negative incentives must be removed.

Participants called on IUCN to work towards bringing nature into economic recovery. They stressed that the finance and business sectors need to be part of the systemic change towards a nature positive economy, noting that there is no shortage of capital in the private markets, but that it must shift to nature, and that information on the impacts of specific investments on nature is needed. They also highlighted the need for partnerships, the importance of addressing inequities and injustices, and the need for scientifically robust data, metrics and knowledge.



Upholding rights, ensuring effective and equitable governance

In the **governance and rights** theme, participants stressed that while the planet is facing an acute crisis, disproportionate burdens are landing on those contributing least to this crisis, including youth, women, and environmental human rights defenders. The problems we are facing demand action, and participants emphasised that to act, all the tools at our disposal must be mobilised and listening must be improved. Participants also acknowledged that IUCN is becoming a more diverse Union and is all the richer for it. The challenge going forward is to work together to mobilise and support this diversity to ensure we sustain the richness and diversity of the planet we share.

Advancing knowledge, learning, innovation and technology

On the theme of **advancing knowledge, learning, innovation and technology**, participants discussed the importance of standard metrics for biodiversity, as they are already fundamental in driving policy and practice in conservation and sustainable development. For example, data based on IUCN standards are harnessed to provide official indicators of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and other intergovernmental agreements such as the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Maintaining the coverage, currency, and quality of these crucial datasets into the future requires investment and innovation. Participants also emphasised the potential held by knowledge frontiers such as artificial intelligence, modelling, genetics & genomics, remote sensing, national-global linkage, indigenous & local knowledge, citizen science, and



social media. They highlighted the great advances seen in the last few years in method development for measuring conservation impact, for example through counterfactual approaches and evidence synthesis, spanning conservation and restoration across terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments. Participants noted that an emerging family of metrics, tools, principles, standards and initiatives such as the Species Threat Abatement and Restoration (STAR) Metric, the IUCN Green Status of Species, the Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas, the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions, the Principles for Ecosystem Restoration, and the #ReversetheRed global movement, are increasingly allowing targeting, maximisation, and measurement of conservation impact – all of which will be crucial in supporting the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the Paris Agreement and nature-based recovery in general.





High Level Summits

On 3 September 2021, the first day of the Congress, IUCN organised four High Level Summits convening stakeholders from Youth constituencies, Indigenous Peoples' Organisations, Local Authorities and CEOs. The Summits sent an important signal to IUCN constituents about the critical role of all four groups in policy processes and in the successful delivery of IUCN's programmes. A fifth summit, the Mediterranean PAMEX Summit, unveiled a new high-level action plan for the Mediterranean.

CEO Summit

At the CEO summit, global business leaders showcased ways of moving from commitment to action and building a nature-positive future. They also focused on accelerating the scaling up of action through collaboration and green investments, both of which will enable the transformation to an inclusive, nature-positive future.

Alan Jope, CEO of Unilever, said that businesses have made huge progress in the last few years in understanding the moral and economic imperative for protecting and enhancing nature. But now they need to ask themselves whether they are part of the critical mass of companies that can drive a tipping point over the next five years.

Magdi Batato from Nestlé Global said there is strong and growing determination in the food and beverage sector to embrace regenerative agriculture and sustainable management of landscapes.

Antoine Frerot, Chairman and CEO of Veolia, stated that if business does not respect nature, it will be forced to change. He added that more solutions and business models for biodiversity and nature conservation are emerging and that Veolia is implementing solutions towards a circular economy, energy efficiency, methane capture and much more.

Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, CEO of the Global Environment Facility, summed up the three main objectives for private sector stakeholders as becoming nature positive, carbon neutral and pollution free.

Global Youth Summit

The Global Youth Summit (GYS) was a follow-up from the first fully virtual IUCN Global Youth Summit held in April, 2021. It was moderated by Hannah Moosa, IUCN Forum Deputy Manager and Camila Perez Gabilondo, Programme Officer for the Commission on Education and Communication at IUCN, who have worked to mainstream youth voices throughout the Forum. The moderators urged the audience to listen to youth voices, and take action.

Diana Garlytska, Co-chair of the Steering Committee, CoalitionWILD, Lithuania, presented the outcome statement from the April Summit.

Bruno Oberle, Director General of IUCN, noted that IUCN would finalise a youth engagement strategy by the end of 2021, and appoint a youth advisory committee.

Brighton Kaoma, Director of UN SDSN Youth, joining virtually, said the outcome

statement highlights how young people are mobilising and taking action in their own ways.

Some of the key messages from the summit panel discussions included concerns that the youth movement faces challenges of tokenism, of not being respected and not being listened to. They stressed that youth want involvement in key decision making in policy. They see indigenous knowledge as crucial for creating solutions to nature and environmental challenges. Speakers also said that intersectionality of the various spheres — social, cultural, economic — in society and across age groups is essential for an effective dialogue.

“You are being pulled wool over your eyes by current decision makers - they are not listening! The world is not exactly listening to you. You need to make them listen to you. Speak your own language,” said Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands.



Local Action Summit

This is the first time IUCN has dedicated a summit to cities and sub-national governments.. The event was moderated by Jonny Hughes, Chair of the IUCN Urban Alliance. The objectives of the summit were: i) to showcase the range of actions that local governments and their partners can take to deliver conservation outcomes and scale up those outcomes; ii) to foster partnerships between IUCN constituents and sub-national governments; and iii) to get commitments from sub-national governments to deliver the Nature 2020 IUCN programme, and by extension, the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Local and subnational governments control many of the key areas that affect their environments, such as zoning, buildings, sanitation, and public transport, and there have been many success stories and stirring pledges emerging up from these governance levels.. Challenges faced at those scales include funding, knowledge gaps, a lack of clear goals and a lack of authority to act.

IUCN President Zhang Xinsheng, by video message, said that the efforts of cities and the regions are central to the success of a global conservation agenda.

Emmanuelle Wargon, French Minister for Housing, said local communities have their own level of competence – they are close to the people and the territories and people’s day-to-day concerns. This is one of the keys to addressing the crisis of biodiversity loss.

The Summit highlighted several instances where cities and regional governments are taking action towards becoming nature positive. For example: Genoa aims to create a fully electric public transportation system by 2025; Tunis will redesign city circulation to favour bicycles; the region Île de France will triple the number of natural reserve areas within 5 years and Aix-Marseille-Provence will work with the WWF and local governments to stop plastic pollution on their Mediterranean coast by 2025.



World Summit of Indigenous People and Nature

This was the first Indigenous Peoples' Summit integrated into the programme of an IUCN World Conservation Congress. Speakers noted that it was a milestone in a long journey to give full participation to indigenous peoples in the development of conservation norms and practices, following the historic decision at the 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress to create a new membership category for IPOs (indigenous peoples' organisations).

The summit opened with a spiritual invocation by Felix Sarazua, Asociación SOTZ´IL, and a minute of silence in memory of indigenous peoples who have died during the pandemic.

Bruno Oberle, Director General of IUCN, said he hoped that we can include the wealth of knowledge that indigenous peoples are offering to humanity into our general behaviour, and through this, change current destructive behaviours.

Aroha Mead, an independent researcher based in New Zealand, recalled the IUCN World Parks Congress in Durban in 2003 when indigenous peoples met outside the main congress centre, in a tent in the parking lot, and stressed that the 2016 decision to grant IPOs a membership category is not just about inclusion, but also about legitimacy and credibility.

Speakers recalled that while indigenous peoples have an important role as Earth's guardians, and that their traditional approaches enable effective conservation, they are particularly vulnerable to climate change and biodiversity loss.

They pointed out that calls for action by indigenous groups have led to a growing impact on international policy processes. In addition to the IPO membership category at IUCN, IPOs have developed a Global Indigenous Agenda, which has been welcomed by IUCN with promises to respond proactively.



Speakers also highlighted the need to decolonise conservation, with the need for free, prior, and informed consent of local communities to be properly implemented. They called for greater recognition of traditional knowledge and value systems from the scientific community, and increased agency of indigenous peoples in decision-making processes.

Furthermore, they warned that effective conservation efforts by indigenous communities should not simply be an offset for poor environmental practices elsewhere.

Mediterranean PAMEX Summit

At the Mediterranean PAMEX Summit, a new action plan entitled “The Mediterranean: a model sea by 2030” was launched by a group of countries including France, Greece, Albania, Morocco, Egypt and Algeria. The plan aims to reverse the loss of marine biodiversity.

The Mediterranean is one of the most important biodiversity hotspots in the world, home to an estimated 8% of global fauna and 18% of global flora. Today, an estimated 40% of marine species in the Mediterranean are threatened. Speakers agreed that the challenges in reversing the decline are significant, but they committed to building an exemplary Mediterranean.

Concrete actions presented were grouped around four axes: preserving biodiversity, ending overfishing, reducing marine pollution and making marine transport sustainable. Speakers stressed that this approach needs to be inclusive and involve all stakeholders. In addition, speakers highlighted that this approach should be a coalition between public and private institutions, taking into account not only the environmental domain but the social and economic domains as well.



Snapshot of Forum and Exhibition events

Attendance and viewership

Despite the difficult context, over 5,000 registered participants attended the Congress on-site, and nearly 25,000 members of the public visited the Congress Exhibition. Over 2,500 additional registered participants joined the Forum online, and viewed more than 11,000 hours of broadcast across a vast agenda of over 250 sessions.

Session types

The Forum was structured around many different formats to allow for a diversity of participants to engage in multiple types of interactions, from the most formal High-level sessions to the very free-flowing events in the Exhibition. These various formats are described succinctly [here](#).



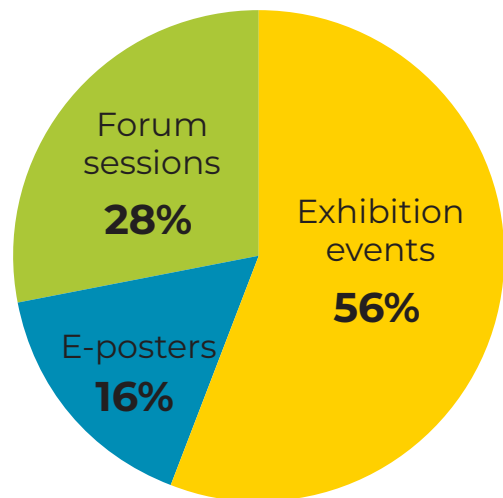
Event statistics

A total of 950 sessions in various formats were delivered, ranging from plenaries to highly interactive Breakfast with... and Interview with... conversations.

Event types

Event type	Total
Forum sessions (all formats)	269
E-posters	155
Exhibition events (on stands and Central stages)	526
TOTAL	950

Breakdown of event types, as a percentage



Forum sessions by format

Forum session by format	Total
on-site with livestreaming*	124
pure virtual**	129
on-site only***	16
TOTAL # of Forum sessions all formats	269

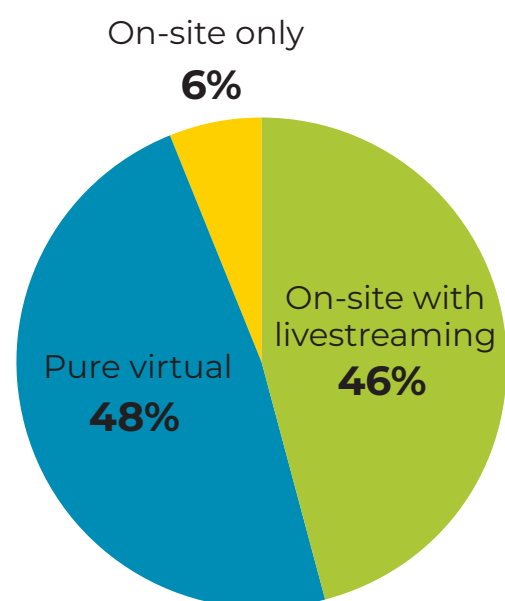
*this includes the Forum Opening and Closing, Forum High-Level Events, Thematic Plenaries and Thematic Stream Sessions

**Thematic Stream Sessions, Campus sessions, and Conservation Action Cafés

***Breakfast with... and Campus sessions

These 269 Forum sessions were organised by 230 primary session organisers coming from 49 different countries.

Percentage Forum sessions by format



Forum participant statistics

Total number of registered Congress participants*

Type of registration	Count
Individuals registered for on-site participation	6657
On-site participants (final count)	5078
Online participants	3479

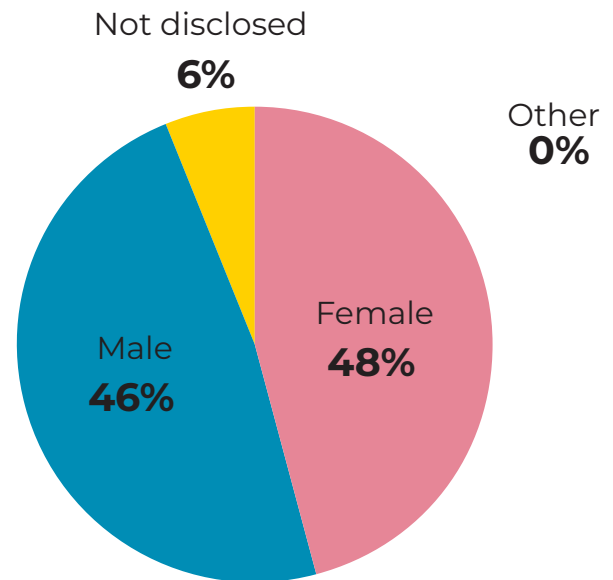
**including members, general participants, commission members, IUCN committee members, VIP entourage, exhibitors, media, accompanying persons, and IUCN staff*

On-site registered Congress participants came from over 150 countries, territories and dependencies (country of residence) from around the world.

Gender balance of individuals registered for on-site and online participation

Gender	Count
Female	4882
Male	4664
Not disclosed	574
Other	16

Gender balance as percentage

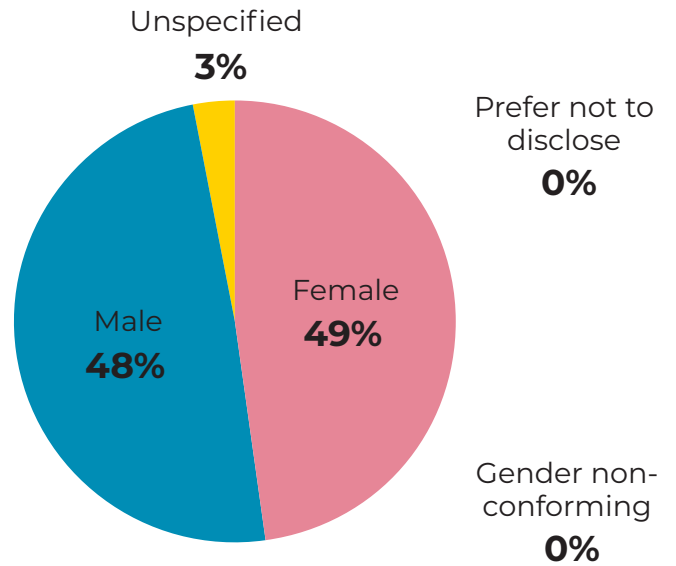


Forum Speaker statistics

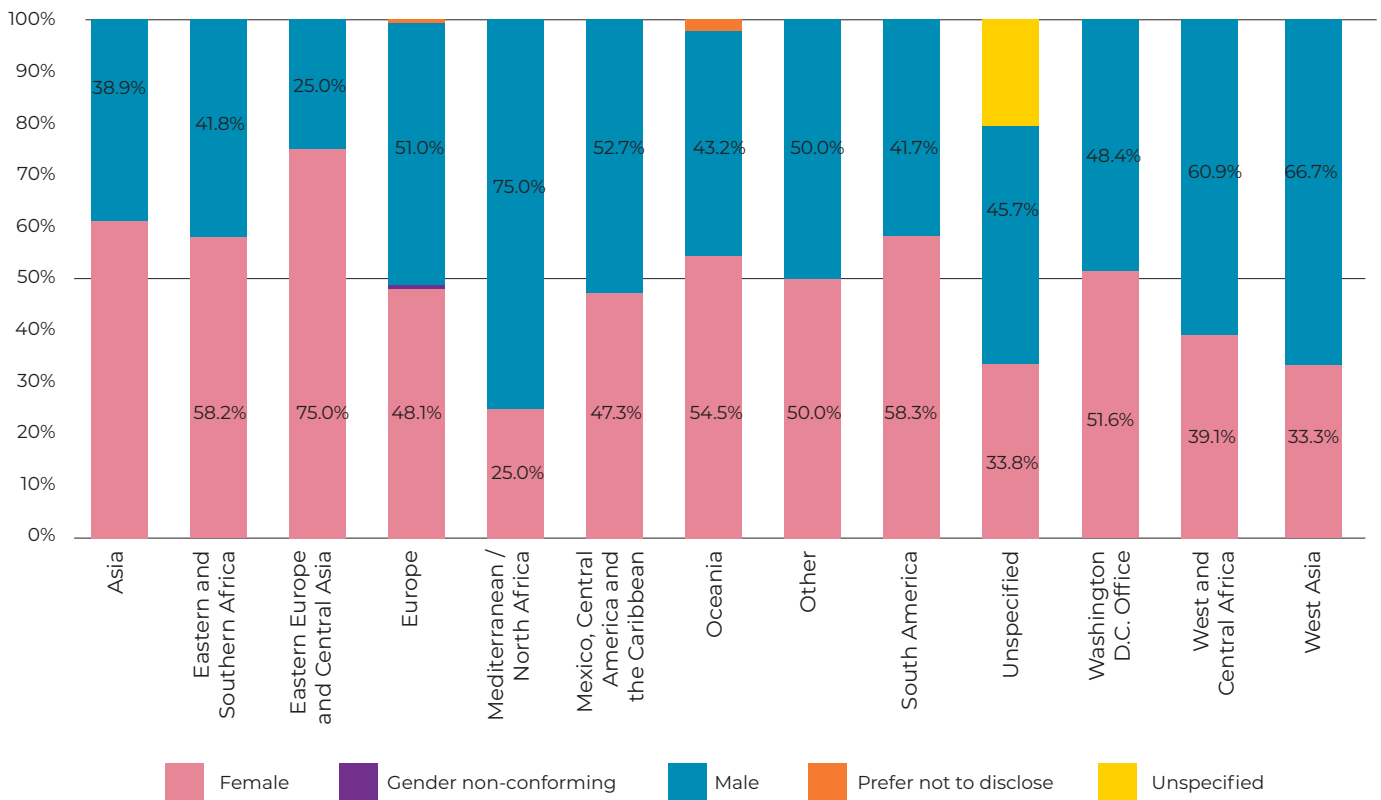
Total number of speakers, by gender (Forum and Exhibition sessions)

Gender	Count of Gender
Female	593
Gender non-conforming	2
Male	590
Prefer not to disclose	4
Unspecified	31
Grand Total	1220

Gender balance of speakers as a percentage



Speaker gender balance (as a percentage) by IUCN Operational region (based on speaker's country of nationality)



IUCN would like to thank the Forum team of rapporteurs led by Denise Young, for their contributions to this report.



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