



# IUCN WORLD PARKS CONGRESS SYDNEY 2014



**Report: IUCN World Parks Congress, November 2014,  
Sydney, Australia**

The IUCN World Parks Congress is a major forum for advancing global protected area policy and practice. The 6th Congress, held in November 2014 in Sydney, Australia was attended by almost 6.000 participants from 170 countries. It was organised within eight Streams, addressing biodiversity, climate change, health, ecosystem services, development, governance, indigenous peoples issues, youth and new generation and four Cross-cutting Themes (where components were presented across all the Congress Streams) addressing marine issues, capacity building, World Heritage and a new social compact.

With its theme '*Parks, People, Planet: Inspiring Solutions*', the Congress aimed to find better and fairer ways to conserve natural and cultural diversity, involving governments, businesses and citizens in establishing and managing protected areas, inspire people around the world and across generations to reconnect with nature and demonstrate natural solutions to our planet's challenges, such as climate change, health, food and water security.

The ambitions of the Congress were to embrace innovative and transformative approaches that address new challenges for protected areas in the global context for the decades to come.

Very interesting poster presentations shown at the Congress are still available online; please click: <http://wpc2014.digitalposter.com.au/>

Summary of day-by-day events and sessions can be found here:  
<http://www.iisd.ca/iucn/wpc/2014/>

Internationally-recognized experts, politicians, CEOs, activists and indigenous leaders were tackling key issues related to protected areas, conservation and sustainable development in the frame of facilitated discussions, called World Leader's Dialogue; click here:  
[http://worldparkscongress.org/programme/world\\_leaders\\_dialogues.html](http://worldparkscongress.org/programme/world_leaders_dialogues.html)

The Congress celebrated increase in the extend of the area protected at the global level, reaching 15,4 % of the terrestrial land and 3,4% of the oceans under protection. At least for terrestrial ecosystems this is a promising way in reaching the CBD Aichi target 11 (17% of area protected at the global level). UNEP-WCMC Protected Planet report 2014 was launched at the Congress <http://www.protectedplanet.net/about#>, summarising recent data on protected areas. Management effectiveness of protected areas is still far behind the levels which would ensure long-term biodiversity protection and the question is if they are located in the most important places and well-embedded into wider conservation planning.

Below you will find just key words and only some of the featured major Stream/Theme's outputs that were presented in Sydney:

*Streams - highlights:*

**Reaching Conservation Goals** stream called for actions to prevent further biodiversity loss by establishing more, bigger, properly placed, inter-connected and better managed protected areas, including areas with “no-take” zones and promoted use of new and enhanced conservation tools such as “Key Biodiversity Areas” <http://www.biodiversitya-z.org/content/key-biodiversity-areas-kba> and “Green List” of well-managed protected areas [http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/gpap\\_home/gpap\\_quality/gpap\\_greenlist/](http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/gpap_home/gpap_quality/gpap_greenlist/).

The **Climate Change** stream highlighted new directions for planning and management of protected areas including provision of natural solutions for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Read interim specific targets in responding to major environmental changes and the role of protected areas here: <http://worldparkscongress.org/drupal/node/141>

**Improving Health and Well-being** stream concluded that “conservation and good protected area management will save more lives than health sector”. More on the process: <http://www.hphpcentral.com/>

Stream on **Supporting Human Life** emphasised that “protected areas are most valuable investments in securing, maintaining and making available ecosystem services” offering food, water and livelihood for humans. Climate Change guidelines for forest managers can be seen here: <http://worldparkscongress.org/drupal/node/97>

**Reconciling Development Challenges** stream put protected areas in the context of reaching global sustainable development goals and concluded that “good conservation is good development”. A summary of innovative approaches to reconciling development challenges is found here: <http://worldparkscongress.org/drupal/node/144>

The **Governance** stream exposed diversity of governance types, including co-managed, indigenous and community and private protected areas which reflect cultural richness and presented innovative partnership models for management. Indigenous and Local Knowledge stream embraced the diversity of knowledge and skills in management of the natural resources, and set them in the context of rights and

responsibilities within the governance models. The Futures of Privately Protected Areas book was launched, click here:

<http://worldparkscongress.org/drupal/sites/default/files/documents/docs/Privately%20Protected%20Areas.pdf>

**Respecting Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge and Culture** theme discussed the role of traditional and indigenous knowledge and practices, as well as recognizing cultural and spiritual values, in sustaining and enhancing the socio-environmental resilience of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and the lands and seas in their care. Several new publications were launched, including Urban Protected Areas book, [http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/bpg\\_urban\\_protected\\_areas.pdf](http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/bpg_urban_protected_areas.pdf)

**Inspiring New Generation** stream expressed the need to re-connect youth and urban population to nature and the need of mentoring and empowering young professionalism. “Kids to Nature!” A strategy to inspire a new generation can be read here: <http://worldparkscongress.org/drupal/node/169>

*Cross-cutting Themes highlights:*

**World Heritage Theme** highlighted the need of keeping outstanding universal values and to maintain rigorous WH processes. WPC celebrated launch of the WH outlook global report evaluating the conditions and trends of all 228 natural and mixed WH sites and emphasised the need of integration of indigenous perspective and cultural dimensions. Please click: <http://www.worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org/about-the-world-heritage-outlook>

**Marine Theme** was based on the fact that Life on Earth depends on Oceans, where marine protected areas were perceived as “beacons of hope”. Despite considerable progress in protecting marine areas, further efforts have to be made, especially in the High Seas. “Google Ocean Viewer” was launched; <http://worldparkscongress.org/drupal/node/188>.

**Capacity Development Theme** exposed the need of professionalising protected area managers and staff by developing competences, curricula, knowledge and presented examples of new partnerships and learning initiatives. The role of traditional skills in capacity development for protected areas was outlined. Protected Area Management and Governance e-book, the most comprehensive publication WCPA has ever produced, has also been launched at the Congress <http://protectedareabook.org/project-overview/>.

**New Social Compact Theme** expressed the need for humility, trust and diversity of custodians for reaching effective and just conservation. “Landscape fragmentation means social fragmentations”. Click: [http://worldparkscongress.org/programme/theme\\_new\\_social\\_compact.html](http://worldparkscongress.org/programme/theme_new_social_compact.html)

While highlighting the need for keeping and improving the standards of conservation, WPC presented new tools and approaches to conservation and offered natural solutions to global change problems. Discussions were held on what should be the ultimate targets for the nature conservation for the future, especially beyond the year 2020 in the context of setting

new CBD goals. “Nature needs half” concept is one of the options discussed. It is based on scientific assumptions defining the needs to ensure long term co-existence of nature and people; it provides a long-term vision of sustainability for the Planet.

The final Congress statement was agreed and published as **The Promise of Sydney**, offering a broad constituency to make their own promise and commitments in the period of ten years and beyond after the World Parks Congress towards achieving the outcomes. **The Promise of Sydney**, is based on four components: vision, promises/commitments, innovative approaches and solutions; to read it in full please click here: [http://www.worldparkscongress.org/about/promise\\_of\\_sydney\\_vision.html](http://www.worldparkscongress.org/about/promise_of_sydney_vision.html)

WPC already saw commitments from several governments, organisations and individuals to the Promise. Examples include financial contributions to the establishment and management of protected areas and several other initiatives, including organisation of the “**Little Sydney: Protected Europe conference**” in Austria in May 2015. More information and second announcement for this major protected area event in Europe in the year 2015 will be provided immediately in the beginning of the next year. Please note the date and place of this event already now: Hainburg, National Park Donau Auen, Austria, 28 – 31 May 2015!

Let us to conclude this summary report with the statement given by Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and former IUCN DG: “*At the previous WPC in Durban, protected areas were at the last lines of defence and now protected area moved to the front line*”. **Protected areas moved from reactivity to action!**

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