

**From:** [President - IUCN](#)  
**To:** [+IUCN Councillors 2016-2020](#)  
**Subject:** FOR APPROVAL BY THE IUCN COUNCIL within 24 hours, i.e. by 18:30 UTC on 19 March 2020 – Bureau recommendation to postpone the IUCN Congress 2020  
**Date:** 18 March 2020 19:30:05

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Dear members of the IUCN Council,

**May I invite you to reply to this message, within 24 hours, with your response to the question whether you approve the following draft decision recommended by the Bureau:**

**The IUCN Council,**

***On the recommendation of the Bureau to postpone the Congress in consideration of the rapidly evolving crisis caused by Covid-19, and its impact on the organisation of the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020 scheduled for 11-19 June 2020,***

**Requests the Secretariat to:**

- 1. discuss with the French Government to postpone the IUCN Congress until a later date that will allow all IUCN Members and partners to participate;**
- 2. report back to the President and the Chair of CPC in order to agree the text of a joint communication by IUCN and the French Government about the postponement;**
- 3. report the results to the Congress Preparatory Committee which shall make a recommendation to Council of a new date and other aspects of holding the Congress at a later date.**

Convened at my urgent request, the Bureau met yesterday, 17 March 2020, by conference call, attended by all Bureau members except Ana Tiraa due to the time difference. The worldwide Covid-19 crisis has made it imperative for IUCN to urgently take a decision on the impact of the crisis for the holding of the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020 scheduled for 11 to 19 June 2020.

The Bureau meeting was preceded by a conference call held on 16 March with Jennifer Mohamed Katerere, Chair of the Congress Preparatory Committee (CPC), Vice-President Ana Tiraa, Acting Director General Grethel Aguilar and Congress Director Enrique Lahmann. Vice-President Ali Kaka who was also invited, could not join the meeting due to an urgent meeting with his government.

The Secretariat reported to the Bureau that the daily contacts with the host country representatives from France, the last one on Friday 13 March 2020, had made it clear that broad agreement had emerged to conclude that the Congress could not be held in June as planned. While in some regions of the world the crisis caused by Covid-19 might by then have diminished or ended, it would not be the case in other regions, thereby making it highly unlikely that IUCN Members and partners from across the globe will be able to come to Marseille in June. Options such as cancelling the Congress or reducing the size of Congress by restricting the number of participants have already been discarded by the Secretariat and its counterparts from France as they would not meet the expectations of our Members and would make key decision-making processes very difficult. The option to postpone the Congress had therefore appeared to be the most viable option to a date yet to be examined.

The Bureau was also informed that French President Macron is very soon considering options regarding a number of international events to be held in June 2020 that he would honour with his presence, including the IUCN Congress.

The Bureau unanimously agreed that, for the reasons already described, postponement of the IUCN Congress is the most viable option, to a later date yet to be examined, if possible in 2020. As a first step, to be implemented as soon as possible, a decision by France and IUCN needs to be taken and communicated jointly, to postpone the Congress. The second step is to determine, together with France, a new date for the Congress – which may take more time as several important factors such as the evolution of the Covid-19 crisis and availability of the Congress venue and hotel space need to be taken into account.

The Bureau therefore recommends the Council to give a mandate to the Acting Director General and her team to discuss postponement with the representatives of the French Government (point 1 of the draft Council decision) and to report back to the IUCN President and the Chair of CPC with the view to agreeing a joint communication (point 2 of the draft Council decision).

**Given the urgency of this matter, I would like to ask Council members to respond to this message within 24 hours, i.e. by 18:30 UTC on 19 March 2020.**

For the decision to be valid, at least half of the members of the IUCN Council, i.e. nineteen (19) Councillors, must take part in the vote by responding to this message. The decision must be made by a simple majority of the votes cast ('yes' and 'no' votes).

Thank you and take good care of yourself,

**ZHANG Xinsheng**

**President**

IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature)

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