



IUCN Youth Strategy 2022-2030



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Foreword

Young people are the future. We need their help and engagement, their unique perspectives and fresh ideas as well as their expertise to address the global challenges humanity is facing. This new IUCN Youth Strategy recognises this.

The Strategy is inspired by young people's energy and passion and by their capacity to innovate. It builds on existing youth mainstreaming efforts and experiences across the Union, drawing on the rich experiences and knowledge of IUCN Members, Commissions and Secretariat, as well as the outcomes of the IUCN Global Youth Summit 2021, and is guided by the IUCN Programme 2021–2024. IUCN has a long history of championing youth since 1956 and has led youth-focused activities through its Programmes and Resolutions from multiple IUCN Congresses and events.

A 2020 Review of Youth Engagement and Intergenerational Partnership across IUCN and my response to the review that was launched in 2021 at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Marseille following consultations with the six chairs of the IUCN Commissions identified three immediate priorities, including the finalisation of the IUCN Youth Strategy.

The IUCN Youth Strategy provides a framework for meaningful youth engagement, bringing together different generations to join efforts in reversing biodiversity loss, conserving nature and managing natural resources sustainably. For this Strategy to be successful, I call all parts of the Union to endorse this Strategy and to take proactive steps to develop actions towards its implementation. I look forward to collaborating with young people from all parts of the world and advancing intergenerational partnerships.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the dedicated and enthusiastic team of young people from the IUCN Secretariat, Commissions and Members, who coordinated the preparation of this Strategy.



Dr Bruno Oberle

IUCN Director General

Mission

The IUCN Youth Strategy aims to embed young people's perspectives, inclusion and empowerment in all parts and at all levels of the Union. This will allow young people to meaningfully contribute to IUCN's vision of a just world that values and conserves nature.

Drawing on the rich experiences and knowledge of IUCN Members, Commissions and Secretariat, and guided by the [IUCN Programme 2021-2024](#), this strategy builds on existing youth mainstreaming efforts, ensures meaningful engagement of young people and supports initiatives led by young people.



Value statement and guiding principles

The main value of the IUCN Youth Strategy is the framework it provides for ensuring meaningful engagement of young people to bring together different generations to join efforts in reversing biodiversity loss, conserving nature and managing natural resources sustainably. The strategy recognises the role and contribution of young people, their unique and fresh perspectives as well as their expertise. It is inspired by their energy, passion and capacity to innovate, unite diverse ideas and take advantage of new technologies, novel information sources and communication channels to create and enhance impact.

The following aspects are essential to fully value young people and overcome tokenism:

- ❖ Diverse young voices and perspectives are heard, including through meaningful roles in key IUCN events and initiatives;
- ❖ Inclusion principles are applied, ensuring young people across genders, socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnicity, ability or disability and other identities are included;
- ❖ Young people are equal partners in nature conservation and recognised as leaders in their communities;
- ❖ Young people can participate in and influence decision-making processes;
- ❖ Young people have the capacities and skills to champion youth-led actions.

The IUCN Youth Strategy is guided by four key principles:



1. Ensure that efforts are Union-wide, involving actions by all parts of IUCN
2. Mainstream engagement of young people into IUCN's programme, projects and governance
3. Young people must co-design and lead the Youth Strategy and its implementation
4. Youth Strategy outcomes must be realistic, measurable and sufficiently resourced

1. The road to the youth strategy

Why young people need to be heard

Young people are increasingly worried about their future. They feel, see and experience the impacts of the decisions made by previous and current generations. These decisions deeply impact young people's lives, aspirations and opportunities.

In spite of the challenges they now face, young people are active and passionate advocates for more sustainable ways of living and are already taking action in their communities and beyond.

“
Young people are experts in the matters that concern their lives. We must ensure youth are engaged as equal partners and stakeholders in policy formulation and implementation when it comes to biodiversity conservation.

*Ms Jayathma Wickramanayake,
UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth
Youth Summit in Marseille 2021*

Growing action for change

Young people represent more than half of the global population, the majority of whom are in Asia, Africa and Latin America. They are increasingly active in conservation, voicing deep concerns about the linked fields of biodiversity loss, climate change and intergenerational justice. They are also already influencing, participating in and leading conservation and sustainable development actions.

Recent gatherings, such as the IUCN Global Youth Summit, the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Marseille and the 26th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) show youth's concerns about nature's decline and the lack of concrete actions as well as what this means for present and future generations.

Overcoming the barriers

Many young people continue to face deep structural societal challenges. They often do not have easy access to networks, lack the understanding of how to navigate decision-making processes and systems and subsequently fail to flip the right levers to advance change.

IUCN recognises that it is critical to invest in young people, to appreciate their invaluable contributions and to support their meaningful engagement in all areas of nature conservation.


As an organisation comprising a global Union of Members, Commissions and Secretariat staff, IUCN sets the nature conservation policy agenda and spearheads innovation in sustainability. Through the IUCN Youth Strategy, IUCN can amplify young voices and actions that will determine much about the natural world they inherit from current generations.

The approach of the IUCN Youth Strategy

The IUCN Youth Strategy sets out a strategic vision and set of actions to embed young people within IUCN. It consolidates existing IUCN experiences, a 2020 Review of Youth Engagement and Intergenerational Partnership across IUCN, the corresponding response to the review by the IUCN Director General following consultations with all six chairs of the IUCN Commissions as well as the outcomes of the IUCN Global Youth Summit 2021 (see Annex). It builds on the IUCN Programme 2021–2024, relevant IUCN Resolutions and the Marseille Manifesto.

An open, engaging and consultative process (see Annex 4)

The IUCN Youth Strategy was prepared through an open and extensive engagement and consultation process, involving youth and young professionals from across the Union.



Opportunities for young people to engage with the development of the strategy included surveys, write-shops and consultations as well as written comments.

82 Members, 402 Commission members and 27 young professionals from the Secretariat all contributed through tailored surveys. Members, who participated in the survey were consulted on the final draft. 272 young people from across the IUCN Secretariat and Commissions participated in three interactive write-shop sessions, which shaped this strategy. Consultations were also held with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN), the Youth Constituency of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (YOUNGO) and the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.

A broad reference group, made up of senior staff from the Secretariat and Commissions, provided advice. A working group consisting of 17 young leaders from Africa, the Middle East, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and North America coming from IUCN Indigenous Peoples Member organisations, Commissions and the Secretariat accompanied the drafting and consultation process of this strategy.

2. A strong policy foundation

IUCN has long championed the voice of young people. In 1956, the Union established and supported the International Youth Federation for Environmental Studies and Conservation, which united youth-led environmental organisations worldwide until the 1990s. During that period, and up till today, IUCN has led youth-focused activities through its Programmes as well as Resolutions from multiple IUCN Congresses and events.

The IUCN Youth Strategy thus builds on and is guided by decades of policy that continue to motivate IUCN Members, Commissions and the Secretariat to champion young people.


a) The IUCN Programme

The IUCN Programme guides the activities of the Union. Adopted every four years by IUCN's Members, it provides the framework used to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate IUCN's conservation work.

IUCN will actively engage with and invest in youth and intergenerational partnerships to foster the new generations of conservation leaders. To empower youth in conservation, IUCN will improve its outreach to young people so that intergenerational partnerships become a day-to-day reality in the work of the Union, the IUCN Council, the Commissions, Secretariat and Members. IUCN will work across all fronts, including education, engagement, activation and communication to foster intergenerational knowledge sharing, enhance meaningful participation of youth in IUCN's work, and increase youth engagement in policy advocacy and programmes.

Nature 2030: One nature, one future (IUCN Programme 2021-2024)

At the IUCN Congress in Marseille, the [IUCN Programme 2021-2024: Nature 2030: One nature, one future](#) was adopted. It recognises young people as key actors, leaders and partners in nature conservation and environmental sustainability. It highlights the role youth



voices play in spearheading calls to action at all levels of decision-making and aims at unleashing the power of young people and intergenerational partnerships.

Crucially, this includes empowering youth ambassadors and youth-led movements, providing mentoring and learning opportunities and facilitating meaningful participation and representation in decision-making and governance for youth and young professionals.

This IUCN Youth Strategy builds on the spirit of the stated strategic directions of IUCN and provides an actionable framework for their realisation across all parts of the Union – Members, Commissions and the Secretariat.

b) Relevant IUCN resolutions on youth engagement

Every four years, IUCN's Members gather at the IUCN World Conservation Congress to pass joint decisions on the global conservation agenda. These decisions are known as Resolutions and form the body of IUCN's general policy.

The following active Resolutions guide the IUCN Youth Strategy:

- ❖ [WCC 2020 Resolution 062](#): Role of children and youth in nature conservation
- ❖ [WCC 2020 Resolution 046](#): Creation of the Ombudsperson for Future Generations
- ❖ [WCC 2016 Resolution 079](#): Request for an Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the principle of sustainable development in view of the needs of future generations
- ❖ [WCC 2018 Resolution 057](#): Conservation of Pakistan's coastal resources for future generations
- ❖ [WCC 2012 Resolution 008](#): Increasing youth engagement and intergenerational partnership across and through the Union
- ❖ [WCC 2008 Resolution 098](#): Intergenerational partnerships: fostering ethical leadership for a just, sustainable and peaceful world

3. Moving into action 2022–2030

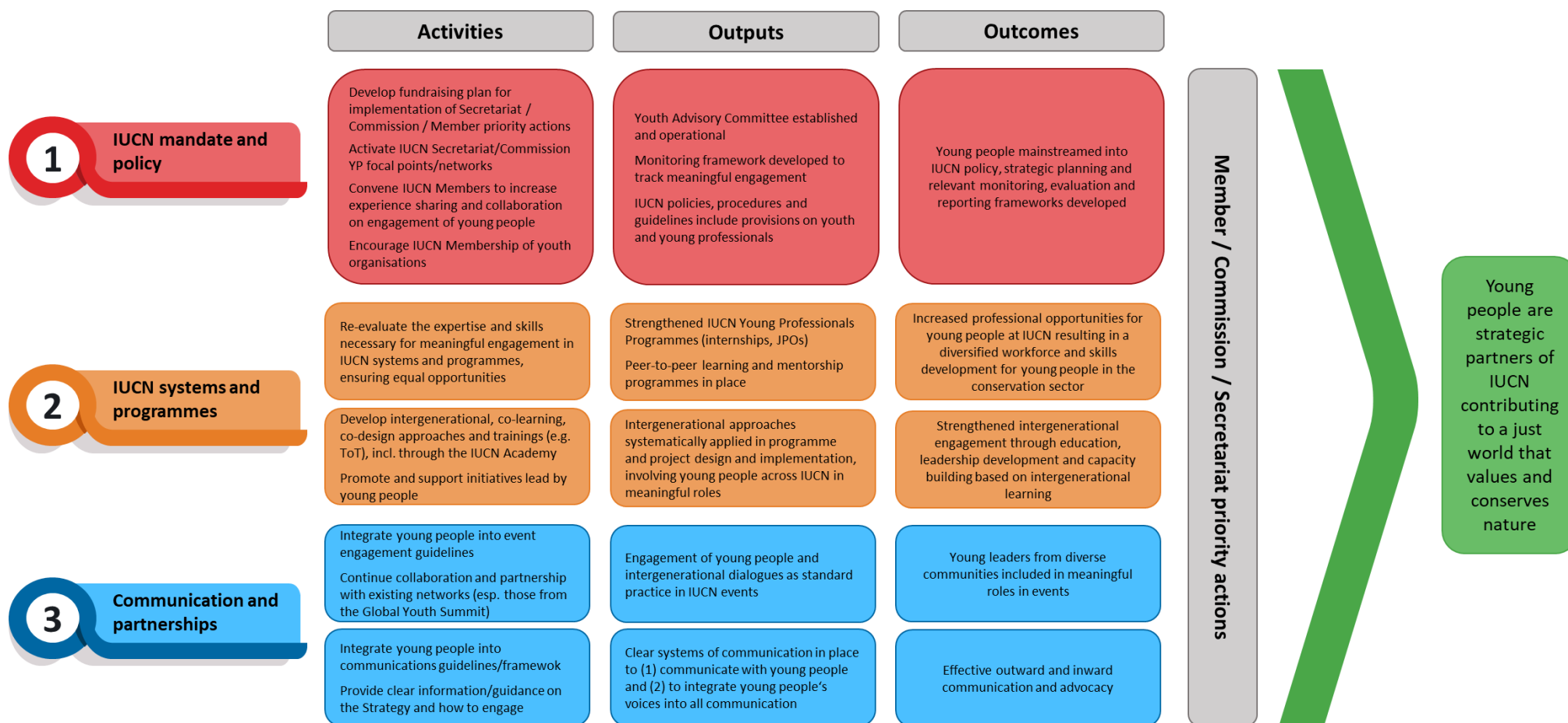
Actions on, with and for young people will be achieved and implemented through:

- a) A Union-wide **action framework**, covering the period 2022-2030; and
- b) **Specific short-term priority actions** of IUCN Members, Commissions and the Secretariat, covering the period until the next IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2025.

The action framework represents the voices of young people from all parts of the Union (see Annex 4). The outcomes, outputs and activities are organised under three overarching themes that aim to enhance the IUCN mandate and policy on young people's engagement and intergenerational partnership; strengthen IUCN systems and meaningfully engage youth and young professionals in programmes, projects and other initiatives; and increase effective communication, collaboration and partnership.

The action framework and specific short-term priority actions will facilitate effective and sustained engagement of young people and intergenerational partnership that is integrated across IUCN Members, Commissions and the Secretariat.

a) Action framework until 2030



b) Specific short-term priority actions identified by Members, Commissions and the Secretariat

The following short-term priority actions were identified in consultation with IUCN Members, Commissions and the Secretariat. They should guide the operationalisation of this action framework and steer the work of the Youth Advisory Committee **until the next IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2025**. The specific short-term priority actions aim to create a domino effect, whereby initial actions trigger further actions to achieve the outcomes of this strategy, as set out in the action framework.

MEMBERS

1. IUCN mandate and policy

- 1.1 Engage and integrate the outcomes of the IUCN Youth Strategy into institutional, programme and project planning and implementation
- 1.2 Encourage IUCN membership of youth-led conservation organisations (to be supported in particular by national/regional committees and the IUCN Secretariat)
- 1.3 Join resource mobilisation efforts to implement the strategy
- 1.4 Report on the engagement of young people as part of the implementation of youth-related IUCN Resolutions

2. IUCN systems and programmes

- 2.1 Provide internship, training, leadership development, intergenerational mentoring and other opportunities for young people
- 2.2 Commit to building organisational capacities on intergenerational co-learning and co-design approaches by developing activities *with* young people
- 2.3 Create synergies between existing youth engagement programmes, projects and initiatives across the Membership, including through national/regional committees

3. Communication and partnerships

- 3.1 Showcase and share success stories and experiences in engaging young people, including at regional Member meetings
- 3.2 Create spaces for young people, including young people from Indigenous Peoples' and Local Communities (IPLC), to share their perspectives and experiences, and involve them in meaningful ways in events and other initiatives

COMMISSIONS

1. IUCN mandate and policy

- 1.1 Enhance the role of young professionals in Commissions by improving their representation in thematic / specialist groups, by creating roles at the leadership level as well as by nominating young professional focal points
- 1.2 Offer capacity building (formal / informal) for young professionals on policy, procedures, strategic planning, etc. within the Union, including through two-way mentoring

1.3 Report on the status of engagement of young people as part of Commission reports to the IUCN Members' Assembly

2. IUCN systems and programmes

2.1 Reinvigorate efforts on intergenerational partnerships, knowledge sharing and the overall culture of collaboration, through an on-boarding programme for new young professional Commission members

2.2 Organise regular networking and knowledge sharing events / intergenerational dialogues (formal / informal), including through #NatureForAll

2.2 Promote paid internships, sponsorship and / or grant schemes and reserve specific roles / opportunities in Commission initiatives for young people

3. Communication and partnerships

3.1 Create a virtual community for Commission young professionals, including a regular newsletter highlighting opportunities for and success stories from young professionals

3.2 Strengthen partnerships with youth-led organisations

SECRETARIAT

1. IUCN mandate and policy

1.1 Recruit a youth engagement coordinator to work closely with the Youth Advisory Committee

1.2 Establish the IUCN Secretariat Action and Fundraising Plan to measure and monitor results, ensuring integration of young people into work plans and human resource practice

1.3 Open up new sectors and donor landscapes that have a strong focus on empowering and partnering with young people (including the private sector and start-ups)

2. IUCN systems and programmes

2.1 Scale up opportunities, lessons learned and good practices through experience-sharing across the Union based on past and existing projects

2.2 Develop intergenerational exchange for the IUCN-specific context, in conjunction with the IUCN Academy, through a certificate / training course

2.3 Create a network of young and senior people to advance engagement of young people on nature conservation and biodiversity, based on the "Breakfast with..." sessions tested at the IUCN Congress in Marseille

3. Communication and partnerships

3.1 Communicate the value and success of young people in nature conservation and ensure engagement with and representation of young people in IUCN events and in major global events

3.2 Ensure coordination across IUCN Centres and Regions to bridge IUCN's work on youth, gender and IPLCs in policy and practice, including by collaborating with IPLCs

3.3 Broaden IUCN's network base in the youth space (at the regional, national and sub-national levels), by strengthening partnerships with youth constituencies, especially in the Global South

Annexes

Annex 1: The InterGens Youth Review

In 2020, IUCN commissioned a review of IUCN's history of youth engagement (InterGens Youth Review). It aimed to guide the development and implementation of meaningful, sustainable Union-wide youth engagement and intergenerational partnerships.

The review found that IUCN's Membership and top leadership, including the IUCN Council, would benefit from enhanced youth representation. While Commissions and the Secretariat already provided opportunities for young people, such efforts and momentum could only be sustained through more concrete commitments.

You [young people] are the future. We need you. We need your help and your engagement.

*Dr Bruno Oberle,
IUCN Director General at IUCN Global
Youth Summit in Marseille 2021*

Major opportunities were found in IUCN's networks, convening power and community building. IUCN Regional and Country offices as well as Member Organisations could play a key role in mobilising localised youth action. However, IUCN's dependence on programme/project funding, its complex structures, lack of a clear framework for intergenerational collaboration and inadequate resource availability for activities for young people created major barriers.

The review also emphasised that young people were not a homogenous group that could be represented by one tokenistic youth spokesperson. Instead, the diversity of youth and young professionals needed to be given due consideration, with the experiences and best practices from IUCN's work on gender mainstreaming¹ providing insights for youth mainstreaming.

The full report of the review of Youth Engagement and Intergenerational Partnership across IUCN can be found here:

- Report:
https://www.iucncongress2020.org/sites/www.iucncongress2020.org/files/page/files/intergens_-_report_-_review_youth_engagement_and_intergenerational_partnership_across_iucn_-_06042021.pdf
- Annexes:
https://www.iucncongress2020.org/sites/www.iucncongress2020.org/files/page/files/intergens_-_report_-_review_youth_engagement_and_intergenerational_partnership_across_iucn_-_annexures_-_06042021.pdf

¹ E.g. [Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy: Mainstreaming gender-responsiveness within the IUCN programme of work](#) and [Gender mainstreaming strategy for IUCN events](#)

Annex 2: IUCN Response to the Youth Review

In response to the InterGens Youth Review, the Director General of IUCN, following consultation with all six chairs of the IUCN Commissions, proposed ten outcomes (summarised in Box 1) as well as key principles to achieve these outcomes (see “Guiding Principles” on page 4).

Box 1

Outcomes proposed by the IUCN Director General in his response to the review of Youth Engagement and Intergenerational Partnership across IUCN

01 A realistic Youth Strategy	06 Launch of IUCN Academy at IUCN Congress in Marseille
02 Effective organisational structure for coordination and implementation of the Youth Strategy	07 Continually improving professional opportunities for young people and diversified IUCN workforce
03 Robust means to track youth engagement	08 Possible IUCN award for youth, depending on business case and funds
04 Sufficient seed funding, agreed partnership and fundraising plan	09 Youth engagement and intergenerational dialogue as standard practice in IUCN events
05 Agreed mentorship scheme positioning across IUCN Members, Commissions and the Secretariat	10 Effective outward and inward communication and advocacy

Three immediate priorities were highlighted:

1. Finalise a new **IUCN Youth Strategy** that integrates and builds on the work of all previous IUCN interventions on youth and the relevant resolutions of its Members. [This outcome is met through this Youth Strategy.](#)
2. Constitute an **IUCN Youth Advisory Committee** (YAC) to support the implementation of the new IUCN Youth Strategy. The YAC will comprise representatives from IUCN Member Organisations, the six IUCN Commissions, the IUCN Secretariat and key youth constituencies and youth-led organisations. [The YAC will oversee and provide guidance on the effective implementation of this Youth Strategy.](#)
3. Establish a **new Heritage, Culture and Youth team**. This is the first time IUCN has a team with a named mandate to support youth in IUCN. This team will ensure youth engagement moves forward purposefully within the Union. [As part of a restructuring process of the IUCN Secretariat that began in 2021, the Heritage, Culture and Youth team was created. This team will coordinate the work on youth across the Union and ensure the roll-out of this IUCN Youth Strategy, its operationalisation and institutionalisation process. This priority still requires funding in order for the team to have staff dedicated to working on the youth engagement portfolio full-time.](#)

The IUCN Director General’s full response to the InterGens Youth Review can be found here:

https://www.iucncongress2020.org/sites/www.iucncongress2020.org/files/iucn_youth_review_-_response_grid_-_3_sep_2021_final_issued.pdf

Annex 3: IUCN Global Youth Summit Outcome Statement

In April 2021, a virtual IUCN One Nature, One Future Global Youth Summit took place, bringing together 15,000 participants from 170 countries. This was followed by a hybrid (i.e. online and in-person) Global Youth Summit at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in September 2021 in Marseille, France.

Throughout the summits, a diverse range of youth voices across genders, nationalities and Indigenous Peoples Organisations and local communities were heard. They all contributed to an outcome statement that aimed to unify global youth around conservation and sustainability challenges, putting forward new ideas, calling for action and agreeing on commitments from youth.

Key highlights of the outcome statement, which fed into the Youth Strategy, are summarised below.



Asks and calls to action include

- accept that young people are well-informed and experienced stakeholders, representing a diversity of expertise and perspectives
- establish mechanisms for the sustained engagement of youth across IUCN decision-making and programming
- provide for intergenerational exchange, cooperation and co-design in programmatic and project work
- ensure that the inclusion and representation of different stakeholders, including youth, is fair and equitable



Commitments made by young people include

- raising awareness about environmental issues in local communities, especially among families and in the youth sector
- supporting biodiversity conservation through their advocacy and research work
- environmental education and outreach
- encouraging community sensitivity to environmental issues and fostering a spirit of volunteering among the general public
- keep working toward biodiversity conservation and youth engagement in governance

This has also fed into the Marseille Manifesto, which was adopted by the IUCN Members' Assembly at the IUCN Congress. The Manifesto commits the Congress to “*respecting and harnessing the perspectives and agency of all citizens, especially youth, the leaders of the future, who constitute almost a fifth of the global population*”. It also calls to “*respect and engage communities, especially Indigenous Peoples and youth*” and states that “*particular efforts must be made to include marginalised groups, and importantly, realise the agency of women, youth, local communities and Indigenous Peoples in investments in nature-based solutions.*”

The IUCN Global Youth Summit outcome statement can be found here:

<https://www.iucnyouthsummit.org/youthspeak>

Annex 4: Preparation of the IUCN Youth Strategy

The preparation of the IUCN Youth Strategy was coordinated by a team of young people from the IUCN Secretariat, IUCN Commissions and IUCN Indigenous Peoples organisation Members. A Union-wide consultation process underpinned the drafting of the strategy. Close consultation was also ensured with youth-led organisations, in order to reflect the broad perspectives of youth and young professionals in conservation.

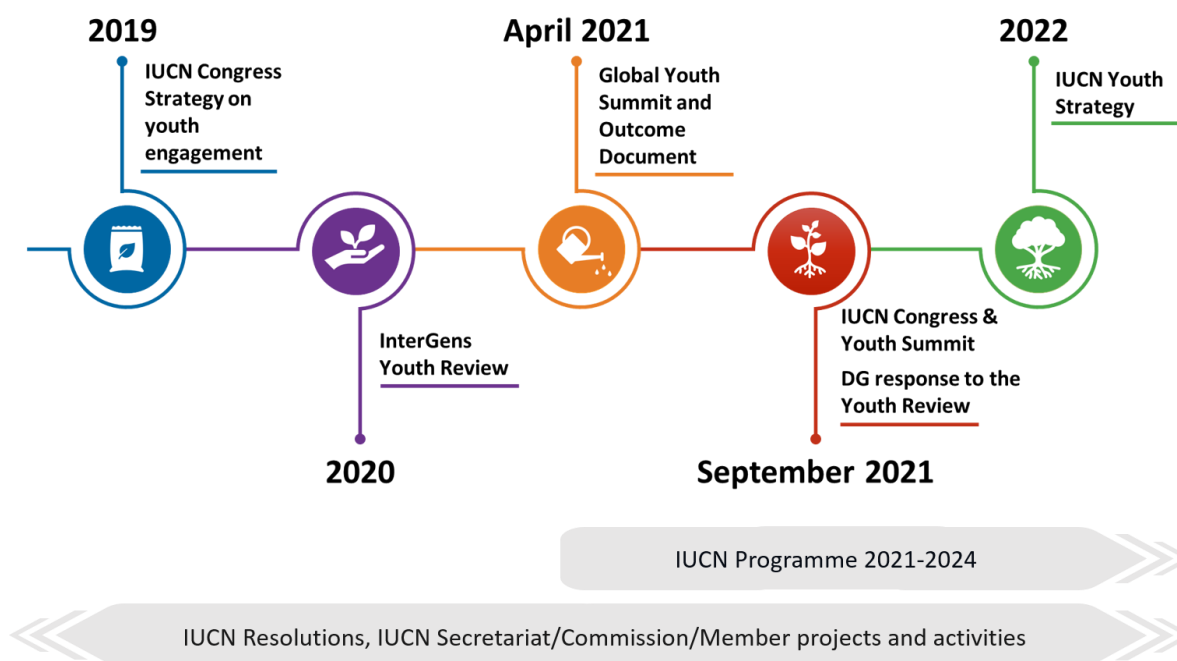


Figure 1: Key stages that led up to the preparation of the IUCN Youth Strategy

Annex 5: Acknowledgements

IUCN is grateful for the invaluable contributions received from 82 Members, 402 Commission members and 27 young professionals from the Secretariat, who contributed through surveys, and from 272 young people, who participated in write-shops. IUCN thanks Parks Canada for their generous support and contribution to the realisation of the IUCN Global Youth Summit. IUCN also thanks the Global Youth Biodiversity Network, YOUNGO, UNEP Major Group of Children and Youth and the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth for the excellent cooperation and support during the IUCN Global Youth Summit and IUCN Congress in 2021 and through consultations on this strategy. Special thanks goes to the working group for coordinating and keeping the development of this strategy on track.

Members of the working group

From the IUCN Secretariat: Roxana Bucioaca, Matthew Emslie-Smith, Hanna Haddad, Clemens Küpper, Kristin Meyer, Hannah Moosa, Aissa Traore

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