Dear Council members,

I submit below on behalf of the recent Bureau meeting, our discussion and conclusions, which was kindly drafted by Mr. Luc De Wever as Secretary to Council.

On 14 September 2020, after deciding to postpone the 2020 Congress to a date yet to be determined and to submit a number of items of the Congress agenda to an electronic vote of the IUCN Members prior to the Congress in order to ensure the continuity of IUCN's global operations, the 100th Council meeting also discussed the question whether to hold the elections by electronic vote prior to the Congress. The meeting was adjourned before we reached a decision. It was agreed to resume the discussion after a short period of time during which further work would be undertaken to converge the views.

During the discussion in Council, several Council members requested that, before Council takes a decision, IUCN Members be consulted on the question regarding the elections. On 22 September 2020, we received a letter from the South American Committee of IUCN Members making a similar request.

On 3 October 2020, I received a letter from seventeen members of the Council requesting an immediate meeting of the Council, based on Article 51 of the Statutes, in order to take the decision to request IUCN Members to decide by electronic vote whether to hold the elections by electronic vote in the first quarter of 2021.

Taking all this into account, I believe it is important that we try everything possible to achieve consensus in Council, and if not, at least, a broad agreement on the way forward and that we act as quickly as possible.

I have therefore taken an initiative in cooperation with the four Vice-Presidents, with the purpose of helping to bridge differences and developing a consensus on how best to proceed, to establish a small working group of six Council members representing in a balanced way the diversity of views on the question of the elections as follows: Jennifer Mohamed-Katerere (GCC Chair) and Jan Olov Westerberg (PPC Chair), Ana Tiraa and Ali Kaka (Vice-Presidents), and Kathy MacKinnon (WCPA Chair) and Antonio Benjamin (WCEL Chair).

The Terms of Reference of the working group are general: assisting the Council with recommendations on how to handle the timing and context of elections (addressing the issue of e-vote prior to Congress versus in person vote at Congress), within three weeks from Wednesday 7 October 2020 onwards, by:

1) Reaching out to IUCN Members to canvas their opinion, with technical support from the Secretariat, through the DG, with the mechanism to be designed and the questions to be framed by the working group;
2) Identify approaches, incl. new compromise solutions not yet considered, that would result in a consensus in Council on how to proceed;
3) As appropriate, frame any question(s) which Members may be asked to vote on electronically, as well as the timeline of the elections themselves if held by electronic means.

The Bureau unanimously supported this approach during its 89th Meeting on 4th October 2020 in the presence of all members of the Bureau, after thorough and constructive discussion.

Aware of the mandatory character of Article 51, the Bureau agreed that we need to act fast. However, we can't emphasize enough the importance of giving this process of trying to converge the views within the shortest possible period of time, a realistic chance of success in order to avoid that the Council next time fails again to take a decision on this matter.

I have therefore requested the Secretary to Council to send to you today a Doodle poll for the (extraordinary) Council meeting with the options to hold it on either 30 October, or 2 or 3 November 2020.

Thank you for your support,

ZHANG Xinsheng
President
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