



WORLD PROTECTED AREAS LEADERS FORUM

2023 Meeting Report

26-30 June, 2023

Krkonoše Mountains National Park and Jizera Mountains Protected Landscape, Czechia





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This document has been produced under the auspices of the World Protected Areas Leaders Forum. The contents therein do not necessarily represent the view of individual members, agencies, or governments.

Acknowledgements

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Tomas Ruzicka (Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic) and Jakub Kašpar (Krkonoše Mts. National Park) provided the necessary leadership in organising the 12th WPALF meeting. The members of the WPALF and IUCN fully recognise and applaud the efforts of staff from Krkonoše Mts. National Park and Jizera Mts. Protected Landscape for hosting participants and for their dedication to protecting Czechia's important natural areas. WPALF is grateful to James Stuart for facilitating the meeting, and to the IUCN Protected and Conserved Areas team for their support to the Czech hosts in all aspects of preparations, convening WPALF membership, and supporting international travel and logistics for participants.

This report was prepared by the Czech hosts, IUCN and IUCN WCPA in consultation with the 2023 WPALF participants.

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Executive Summary

On 26–30 June, the World Protected Areas Leaders Forum (WPALF) took place in the Krkonoše National Park and the Jizera Mountains Protected Landscape Area, generously hosted by The Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic and the Krkonoše Mountains National Park Administration. The first WPALF meeting to be convened in-person since 2019, and the first ever hybrid virtual-in person event, this year's meeting acted as an important opportunity to revisit the role and purpose of WPALF, along with key thematic priorities of protected areas leaders from around the globe.

Protected Area Agency Leads and technical specialists attended the meeting that included educational field trips interspersed with discussions. Inspiring field trips to the Krkonoše arcto-alpine tundra ecosystems, restoration zones at the Jizera peatbog (Ramsar site) and the Jizera Mountains Beech Forests (UNESCO World Heritage Site) highlighted conservation success stories in the Czech Republic.

The discussions helped develop a clear Terms of Reference for WPALF clarifying its objectives and its structure. Discussions included a focus on two broad themes - 1. Global leadership and the future of WPALF and 2. The Kunming-Montreal

Global Biodiversity Framework. Discussions prioritised themes for future WPALF meetings recognising the opportunity to share global experiences in key topics such as mainstreaming protected areas across economic sectors at the national scale, leveraging additional resources for protected area management and focusing on approaches for economic evaluation of protected areas.

The progress of the [2021 Protected and Conserved Areas Joint Statement on Climate Change and Biodiversity Crises](#) was also considered. The ambitions of this Joint Statement remain valid and participants recognised the need to refresh and revisit this work and to consider what mechanisms are best suited to unlock our ambitions to address the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Humankind is seriously impacted by the dual crises of biodiversity loss and climate change and there's an urgent need for transformative action. Protected and conserved area systems are strategic priorities to meet global biodiversity and climate targets. Adequate and sustained financing for protected and conserved area systems is critical to reverse declining trends in biodiversity and to address climate impacts.



Remark from the Hosts – the view from Krkonoše Mountains

The meeting of the World Protected Areas Leaders Forum (WPALF) began on Monday, June 26, at Špindlerův Mlýn, Krkonoše, and ended on Friday, June 30, at the Hejnice Monastery.

The main topics of the meeting were measures to protect the world's biodiversity and climate, but also to explore local Czech life and conservation projects. With experts from all over the world (the meeting was attended by colleagues from Singapore, Malaysia, Great Britain, Finland, Benin, Bhutan, Australia, Canada, Uzbekistan and Romania) we discussed the problem of tourism numbers visiting some parts of the Krkonoše and the Jizera Mountains. WPALF participants greatly appreciated the projects of correction of the hydrological regime on the ridges of both mountains - installation of dams on peat bogs or in peat spruce stands, which return water to biotopes historically drained by amelioration channels. We also discussed current topics of Czech nature conservation, such as the upcoming declaration of the Křivoklátsko National Park, the Soutok Protected Landscape Area and the Ore Mountains Protected Landscape Area. Foreign colleagues were greatly impressed by the Krkonoše tundra, as well as the Jizera Mountains peat bogs and Jizera Mountains beechwoods.

The meeting also resulted in the joint Krkonoše – Jizera Mountains Declaration, in which WPALF participants point out that investments in nature protection and restoration are a necessary condition for the world to cope with the current dual crisis of

climate change and the loss of biodiversity.

The 2023 WPALF participants are responsible for managing more than 1000 protected areas worldwide, covering over 7,500,000 hectares, or six times the size of Czechia!, thus representing solid expertise in the field of biodiversity protection. During long discussions around the implementation of the new Global Biodiversity Framework, the group of leaders stressed the importance of sustained funding for biodiversity conservation and nature restoration in the face of the joint climate and biodiversity crises. We appreciate the acknowledgment of the Czech nature conservation efforts from all international participants and we are looking forward to development of new bilateral cooperation based on sharing best practices, experiences, and knowledge.

On behalf of the hosting institutions - The Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic and the Krkonoše Mts. National Park Administration - we would like to thank participating colleagues from around the world for joining us in the Czech Republic. You helped create a friendly, warm, and productive atmosphere which was evident from all the meeting sessions and made the WPALF 2023 meeting fruitful and successful. Many thanks go also to our colleagues from IUCN and IUCN WCPA for supporting the meetings and to James Stuart for his excellent facilitation. We perceive WPALF as being resumed after a brief pause during the pandemic and are looking forward to future joint collaborations and successful WPALF meetings.



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The Krkonoše–Jizera Mts. Declaration



12th WPALF event, 26–30 June 2023, Krkonoše Mts. National Park and Jizera Mts. Protected Landscape, Czechia

The World Protected Areas Leaders Forum (WPALF) welcomes the leadership and initiative of the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic and its administration of Jizera Mts Protected Landscape Area, the Krkonoše Mts National Park for hosting the 12th WPALF meeting and reconvening this forum after the global pandemic.

The Krkonoše–Jizera Mts. Declaration

Protected and Conserved Areas are incredibly diverse covering a vast array of climates, terrains, waters and ecosystems. These special places, along with Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECM) and dedicated indigenous and local community lands and territories are set to cover to at least 30% of the planet by 2030 with the adoption of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) in December 2022.

With equitable governance and effective management, in partnership with custodians and local communities, these areas play a transformative role, not only to address biodiversity loss, but also in combating climate change as well as unlocking a cascade of additional benefits for mental health and wellbeing, the economy, local jobs.

These benefits were illustrated throughout the 12th meeting of the WPALF through a series of educational field trips, including a detailed examination of the Jizera peat bogs in the Jizera Mountains core area. The management measures taken to restore these peat bogs has not only secured and restored environmental benefits but also reduced carbon emissions, increased carbon sequestration, added to the visitor experience and are supporting jobs in the local economy. Appropriate ongoing resources are essential for management measures to be effective and for positive outcomes to be sustained.

The hosts and participants of the 12th WPALF call on all protected area agencies and governance bodies to help ensure equitable governance and effective management of their systems and networks of special places. Protected and Conserved Areas offer a unique combination of attributes and routes to positively impact the major issues of our time. With further engagement, investment, adjustment to linked policies and by drawing on best practice from across the global family these areas can unlock an even greater cascade of benefits to address biodiversity loss, to support the route to net zero, to improve health and well-being and to underpin local economies.

WPALF - an international forum for leaders of Protected and Conserved Area Agencies

Background

Who We Are

The World Protected Areas Leaders Forum (WPALF) is a network for sharing knowledge and solutions for protected area systems. WPALF offers a unique space for the leaders of protected areas agencies to discuss priority issues and to advance global dialogue and future directions for protected and conserved areas. With an event hosted each year by one of the member agencies, participation in WPALF is by invitation, with the criterion being that the leaders are willing and able to participate as part of this peer group.

Created in 1999 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in collaboration with several international protected areas agencies, the first WPALF meeting was hosted by the U.S. National Parks Service in February 2000 in Virginia. The most recent WPALF event was hosted by the Nature Conservation Agency of Czechia and the Administration of the Krkonoše Mountains National Park from 26–30 June 2023.

WPALF events serve as an important networking opportunity and peer-to-peer exchange mechanism for protected areas agency leaders, most often at the Executive Director level. The objectives of WPALF are to:

- Provide a knowledge exchange forum for protected areas leaders to learn from the experiences of their international peers and counterparts;
- Allow opportunities for the heads of protected areas agencies to discuss topics and concerns of mutual interest;
- Identify emerging issues and trends in protected areas management;



- Discuss and strategise opportunities for protected areas agencies to contribute to the global conservation agenda, including through IUCN fora, CBD and UNFCCC events and meetings; and to
- Enhance and expand professional networks.

The mission of WPALF is to 'promote dialogue and exchange of experiences amongst the principal global agencies overseeing protected areas, and to explore ways, through leadership, to improve the effectiveness of these protected areas'.

WPALF Membership

WPALF is open to all leaders of area-based conservation authorities and agencies. It is a semi-formal network convened annually by a host country, with support of IUCN and the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA). The host and organiser is agreed on a yearly basis and commits to develop and convene the next WPALF forum. Ensuring geographic balance and participant diversity is a key principle of each WPALF event.

Alignment with International Policy Priorities

WPALF allows space for protected areas agency leaders to discuss how their work contributes to achieving international policy and priorities. WPALF events can generate ideas and commitments that leaders can promote through their own national and international channels and networks, especially to contribute to national positions and presence at key policy fora, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

2023 World Protected Areas Leaders Forum WPALF Meeting

Overview

The World Protected Areas Leaders Forum held its 2023 meeting from 26–30 June in Krkonoše Mts. National Park and Jizera Mts. Protected Landscape in the Czech Republic. In total, 27 WPALF members from 12 countries attended in person, with an additional 2 attendees online. A full list of participants are available in Appendix III. The first WPALF meeting to be convened in-person since 2019, and the first ever hybrid virtual-in person event, this year's meeting acted as an important opportunity to revisit the role and purpose of WPALF, along with key thematic priorities of protected areas leaders from around the globe.

The 2023 WPALF meeting focused on two key themes; global leadership and the role of protected and conserved areas (PCAs) in addressing the dual crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. It also offered a timely opportunity to reflect on the achievements of CBD COP15, the adoption of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), and the upcoming opportunities for protected areas agencies to contribute to its implementation. The meeting blended formal and informal sessions and activities for participants, including several field trips to explore the work of the Nature Conservation Agency of Czechia and Krkonoše National Park. The full meeting agenda and background notes from the 2023 meeting can be found in Appendices I and II.



Theme 1: Global Leadership and the Future of WPALF

The Need for Global Leadership

The existential threats faced by PCAs, along with their potential to drive positive outcomes for nature, permeate beyond jurisdictional boundaries. While conservation progress can, and must, be made at the local and regional levels, it is essential to explore and capture the potential for outcomes at an international scale. Harnessing the full potential of PCAs, and the resources necessary to ensure their impact, will require effective leadership and dedication from the global PCAs community. Accordingly, The WPALF participants kicked off the meeting with a discussion on the need for global leadership to unlock the potential of PCAs.

The hybrid (in-person and online) Global Leadership sessions focused on the need for a central body to harness the potential of this group, and the niche that WPALF can and should fill in global challenges, including the climate-biodiversity nexus. This session was opened by remarks from James Hardcastle (Head, IUCN Protected and Conserved Areas Team) who reflected on the warm reception by the Czech hosts and offered IUCN's gratitude to all participants for their commitment and dedication to reconvene and revive the WPALF as a network. The event was then framed by remarks from Dr. Madhu Rao (Chair, IUCN World Commission for Protected Areas) through which she set the scene for the potential for global collaboration to enhance the impact of PCAs (see Appendix V). Recognising the varying natures of WPALF members and their connections to governments, participants agreed that any united 'voice' of a collective group such as WPALF must be sensitive to the challenges and complex dynamics beyond national and international politics, especially in the public domain.

The progress of the [2021 Protected and Conserved Areas Joint Statement on Climate Change and Biodiversity Crises](#) was considered in this context. Parks Canada's role to continue coordinating efforts around the Joint Statement, with a focus on carbon and knowledge exchange, was acknowledged and welcomed. The core themes of the statement all remain relevant, but deeper consideration of what is to be done next is necessary.

The Global Leadership Session also considered the efficacy of WPALF as a collective voice and the potential resource demands such a forum may require. Participants considered questions around whether there are more effective investments/avenues to achieve impact and whether WPLAF is the right tool for maximising impact. There was a strong consensus among participants that the strongest element of WPALF is the knowledge base of the membership and the unique community of leaders who operate in this arena. This expertise and experience, especially in the context of turning policy into reality within a place-specific context, is rarely drawn directly to the surface, with more technical topics often dominating similar fora. Focusing on how this expertise can be captured and shared effectively is a priority.

The Protected and Conserved Areas Joint Statement on Climate Change and Biodiversity Crises was led by National Parks UK and launched at UNFCCC COP26 in Scotland. The Joint Statement, signed by many WPALF attendees, sought to articulate the role of PCAs in the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss, to garner more support for PCAs, and to establish a set of commitments for the signatories.

To consider this potential, the link between WPALF, IUCN, and WCPA was explored further. Participants agreed that IUCN and WCPA could be the bodies through which to develop and articulate the voice of the wider WPALF community and to share it through appropriate global platforms, including UNFCCC and CBD COPs, the World Conservation Congresses, and other IUCN fora.

The Role of WPALF and Future Meetings

As part of the discussion on the role of WPALF, the WPALF Terms of Reference were revisited and adapted (see Appendix IV). Participants also shared ideas on the development of future WPALF events. Several priority themes for future WPALF meetings were also noted (Table 1).

All participants recognised the need to build momentum behind the forum, having managed to re-convene it after the pandemic and expressions of interest were sought. It was agreed that the 2024 meeting of WPALF would take place in Finland, following an offer from Henrik Jansson, Luontopalvelujohtaja-Naturtjänstdirektör - Director, Parks and Wildlife Finland. Sabah Parks expressed their interest in hosting the 2025 event in Malaysia.

IUCN will work with Parks and Wildlife Finland to agree the theme and to finalise dates at the earliest opportunity. The 13th WPALF meeting is likely to be planned for August 2024. IUCN and IUCN WCPA will also work with Sabah Parks to explore their expression of interest, and possibly to seek other expressions of interest. The IUCN Secretariat will encourage attendance from other countries and continents ahead of the next meeting.

Participants expressed their excitement and gratitude to both protected areas leaders for offering to host future WPALF events.

Theme 2: Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

At the 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) held in Montreal, Canada in December 2022, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) parties adopted the new Kunming–

Needs assessment for future WPALF meetings

- Events to be focused on key themes, with clear recommendations and outcomes.
- Establishing a clear and focused outcome of each WPALF meeting supports the ability of leaders to attend, and rewards the host's commitment and investment
- WPALF meeting agenda's balance a broad agenda to ensure relevance and identify common problems, yet also share best practices and develop case studies;
- Detailed planning with clear roles for IUCN, host countries, and participants to get the most out of our time.
- Recognising countries are in different positions but together can support each other
- How we engage others, how we sustain and activate the WPALF, increasing membership.
- Establish a clear and predictable cycle for WPALF meetings - Annual with hosts forecast two years in advance.
- The future 2027 IUCN World Parks Congress will benefit from WPALF insights and strategic inputs to the design and framing of the WPC objectives.

Priority themes for future WPALF meetings

- How we communicate the ecosystem value (natural capital) of protected areas to build support for the 30x30 agenda
- How to build support or access sustainable funding; building case studies around sustainable financing; leveraging public and private financing for PAs.
- 'Other effective area-based conservation measures' OECMs – how we go beyond protected area boundaries – the role of OECMs, community conservation areas
- How do we ensure ongoing effective management of OECM so they are not paper parks – Korea "nature co-existing area" as a moniker for OECMs are a way for other sectors to contribute.
- Role of protected areas are at mitigating climate change – how we use this to unlock climate financing;
- Operational/practical guidance for PA managers on adaptation
- Leading by example – delivering Net Zero in our operations
- Meeting 30x30 challenge – with effectively protected, protected areas – more detailed discussing and sharing to learn from each other
- Ecological corridors – connecting protected areas – helping manage in the face of climate change. OECM role related to ecological corridors

Objectives for future WPALF meetings

- Develop a peer network across the global family of PCAs
- Share knowledge and learn from others facing similar challenges
- Be inspired and re-energised
- Discuss and explore key issues
- Consider how to develop a bigger "voice" for our community of leaders

Table 1: Elements of future WPALF meetings agreed upon by participants.

Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). This was not entirely expected, and stands as a considerable success of the conference.

Ladislav Miko, former Environment Minister of the Czech Republic and a lead negotiator for the EU, shared his thoughts on the journey to success in Montreal and posed a series of questions

to WPALF leaders considering the implications (Table 2).

The presentation was followed by a wide-ranging discussion focused on the many challenges of achieving GBF Target 3 within a 7-year period. It was acknowledged that 7 years is a challenging timeline and that the political emphasis is already shifting to demonstrating in 2030 that we are 'on course' for 30% with the areas determined but the measures not necessarily in place. This was recognised as pragmatic but concern was expressed that taking the eye off the target 7 years out could slow progress at the very point acceleration is required.

OECMs were raised in this context, as many jurisdictions are looking to alternatively conserved areas to allow the gap to 30% to close quickly. What OECMs are and are not, the standards they set, and several other issues were raised, with a suggestion that a future WPALF meeting could further explore the detail of these potentially key concepts to the delivery of Target 3.

While Target 3 has attracted much of the attention so far in wider global dialogue around the GBF, participants agreed that other targets could be very powerful in terms of delivery and could be areas of focus that PCAs can leverage. Participants also agreed that mainstreaming

Discussion questions on next steps for CBD GBF implementation

- 1 7 years for implementation instead of 10, how realistic is to reach the goals? Are we in position to reach the goal by 2035?
- 2 Further growth of protected areas – where is the reasonable limit, what will be the next step until 2050? 50%? Is increase of area of PA delivering the goal, or weakening the protection/conservation?
- 3 Mainstreaming, territorial planning with biodiversity – how to approach it from the conservation side? Is there sufficient political will and/or enforcement power? If not, how to achieve it?
- 4 Monitoring and reporting framework: crucial – but demanding financial and personal investments, which perspectives do we have?

Table 2: Discussion questions on next steps for CBD GBF implementation presented by Ladislav Miko

is a prominent theme and one which PCAs can play into. PCAs sit at a series of intersection points in terms of policy and routes to delivery, some of which is highlighted in the international joint statement on PCAs and climate change already, that already illustrate the potential power of mainstreaming.

From a PCA point of view, mainstreaming is also a necessary mechanism to attract the funding required for PCAs to deliver on conservation. Funding for PCAs is limited but when this work is linked to the numerous other agendas (mainstreaming) that PCAs contribute to – including climate change, health and wellbeing, rural economy, culture, tourism, flood and

disaster reduction – numerous other avenues of public and private funding are available. There were some excellent examples shared of successful leverage and mainstreaming, with one PCA agency nearly doubling their annual budget over recent years through demonstrating the cross-cutting impacts and higher return on investment through the multiple roles that the PCAs play. It was therefore acknowledged as imperative for PCAs to fully embrace the opportunity mainstreaming offers to support our work. It was determined that this is an area of work that should be continued by the WPALF.

Resourcing of PCAs in light of the newly agreed GBF targets will be challenging, as most PCAs are already under considerable pressure – exacerbated through recent energy and cost of living crises – and the wider fiscal environment in the post-pandemic period has left very little room to expand spending. In addition to the mainstreaming point already made, discussions also turned to the ability for PCAs to generate their own income.

From Discussion to Action

In keeping with what participants wanted from this forum, the session on exploring the Dual Crises was adjusted to maximize practical outcomes from the meeting and took the form of an “Offer and Ask” session. This session was design to accelerate knowledge-sharing, to identify strengths and resources available to be shared across agencies, and to capture many of the informal offers of help already made.

Each attendee was asked to note offers the felt able to share including recent case studies, reports and research outputs, or particular areas of expertise. They were also asked to identify current challenges their agencies are facing that other PCA leaders may have already explored or could add additional perspective to. Finally, each attendee reviewed what others had offered to see where they may be able to support or benefit. A summary of the offers and asks is captured in Table 3. The details of all Offers and Asks have been captured and shared with the WPALF attendees, with several connections already made and further collaboration planned. This work will continue through to the next meeting in 2024.



Offers

- Whole Park carbon accounting approach / methodology (including baseline work) – agreed as UNFCCC race to zero approach
- Carbon Atlas
- Green [private] finance facility for NBS [case study & lessons learned] plus ethical framework
- Grants programs to leverage co-investment
- Partnership for discovery + restoration to enlist philanthropy
- Technical support in development of PAs (ecotourism activities, transboundary cooperation)
- The IUCN Green list standard as a measure for effectiveness and improved performance
- Using METT as a tool for adaptive management
- Ecological corridors for providing connectivity and adapting to climate change
- Experience in designation of large-scale marine protected area + management of those networks
- Novel monitoring tools – environmental DNA (eDNA)
- Indigenous engagement + joint management
- Urban natural parks
- Ecological corridors work
- Ecosystem services valuation
- Indigenous Stewardship Framework
- Ecological integrity monitoring program
- Protected area management evaluation
- Measuring and communicating local economic impact
- Restoration planning (execution) of eg peatlands
- Transforming an organisation from production-centered to customer-centered base on LEAN and design thinking
- Technical assistance (Capacity building – how we should count PA in national contest, OECMs)

Asks

- Being more impactful outside protected areas, solving problems related to the PAs
- Solving conflicting issues as indigenous people vs everyone else
- Defining OECMs and other definition in the Target 3
 - i) of private or eNGO non-designated nature reserves
 - ii) of nature-friendly farmland and forestry
 - iii) of non-statutory (unprotected) but recognise through the planning system
- Diversifying types and designations of Protected areas
- Innovative funding
- Creating RAD strategy and implementing it.
- Practical solutions of green-funding for sustainable financing of PA
- Mainstreaming PAs management into all relevant sectors
- Ecotourism and different management modalities and benefits sharing
- Any studies that help to determine the size of workforce necessary to meet demands of Nature recovery / NbS?
- Any case studies of successfully growing a workforce (peatland recreation)
- Valuation work especially avoided costs analysis
- Tech uses – remote sensing/asset monitoring
- Opportunities for targeted specific conservation on key topics
- Share restoration successes

Table 3: Summary of example offers and asks that arose from the practical action session at the 12th WPALF meeting.

Appendix I - Agenda



*WPALF - an international forum for leaders of protected area agencies
12th WPALF event, 26-30 June 2023, Krkonoše Mts. National Park and Jizera Mts. Protected Landscape,
Czechia*

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Day 1 – Monday, June 26

Arrival day – transport from Prague Airport (or railway station) to Špindlerův Mlýn, hotel Erlebachova bouda (www.erlebachovabouda.cz), The Krkonoše Mts. National Park

Transport from Prague Vaclav Havel Airport to the venue in Krkonoše Mts. – bus at 16 pm and individual transport for late arrivals.

Accommodation

19:00 – Welcome dinner – **František Pelc**, director of NCA CR and **Robin Böhnisch**, director of Krkonoše NP, brief presentation of the Krkonoše Mts. NP and Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic

Day 2 – Tuesday, June 27

8:00 – Breakfast

09:00 – Welcome by hosts, introduction to the delegates, what to expect and ambition for the forum

10:00 – Coffee

Global Leadership

10:30 – The need for Global leadership – including perspectives from IUCN (James Hardcastle) and WCPA (Madhu Rao) and update on the Protected Areas Joint Statement (James Stuart) – *on-line session*

11:30 – What does great global leadership look like and how do we unlock it? Facilitated discussion, continued after lunch – *on-line session*

12:00 – Lunch

14:00 – Continued: Unlocking global leadership and the role of WPALF – *on-line session*

15:00 – The Krkonoše–Jizera Mts. Declaration – an introduction

15:30 – Coffee break

16:00 – Field trip to the Krkonoše arcto-alpine tundra (organised by staff of Krkonose Mts. NP)

19:00 – Dinner

20:00 – Friendly gathering with catering – an informal session

Day 3 – Wednesday, June 28

8:00 – Breakfast

9:00 – Field trip to the Krkonoše arcto-alpine tundra (organised by staff of Krkonose Mts. NP)

12:00 – Lunch

13:00 – Transport to Hejnice Monastery in Jizera Mts. Protected Landscape Area by bus (www.klaster-hejnice.cz)

14:00 – Field trip on the way – Jizera peatbog (Ramsar site) and forest restoration after SO₂ deposition (organised by staff of NCA CR)

16:00 – Accommodation

18:00 – Dinner

19:00 – Guided tour of the Hejnice Monastery

20:00 – Informal evening session, presentation of the Jizera Mts. PLA (Jiří Hušek, head of Jizera Mts. PLA and František Pelc, director of NCA CR)

Day 4 – Thursday June 29

8:00 – Breakfast

Exploring the dual crises

09:00 – Post Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework – what are the next steps? Facilitated discussion (with speakers)

10:30 – Coffee break

11:00 – Our role in climate change and at the nexus point of the dual crises. Facilitated discussion (with speakers).

12:00 – Statement development

12:30 – Lunch

14:00 – Field trip to the Jizera Mts. Beech Forests – UNESCO World Heritage site (organised by staff of NCA CR)

18:30 – Dinner

20:00 – Informal discussion

Day 5 – Friday June 30

8:00 – Breakfast

9:00 – Review and adoption of The Krkonoše–Jizera Mts. Declaration, final remarks, closing of the meeting (coffee break included)

11:00 – Lunch

12:00 – Departure to the Prague Airport (with possibility to leave the bus in the City of Prague for those who want to stay for a weekend on their own)



Appendix II - Briefing materials

Background note

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework - What are the next steps for protected areas leaders?

June 29, 2023 WPALF Day 4, Session 1 (09:00 CEST)

Purpose

This background note provides a briefing on the newly adopted Global Biodiversity Framework and identifies areas of discussion on GBF Targets for protected and conserved areas leaders attending the 2023 WPALF meetings.

Context

At the 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) held in Montreal, Canada in December 2022, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) parties adopted the new Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). This framework outlines a set of ambitious targets and actions that must be implemented to safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem services. In order to achieve these targets, it is crucial for protected areas agencies to demonstrate global leadership and actively participate in the implementation process.

Protected and Conserved Areas (PCAs) play a critical role in conserving biodiversity, maintaining ecosystem functionality, and supporting sustainable development. They serve as refuges for threatened species, conserve unique ecosystems, and provide numerous benefits to humanity, including carbon sequestration, clean water provision, and cultural and spiritual values. As custodians of these areas, PCA agencies are uniquely positioned to lead efforts in implementing the GBF, especially those targets addressing area-based conservation. There remains untapped potential for PCA agencies from around the world to coordinate efforts and share best practices for GBF implementation at the system-wide and site-specific protected areas levels. The final text of the Kunming-Montreal GBF is available in Annex 1.

Priority Actions for PCA agencies

The new GBF emphasizes several key elements that necessitate active involvement from protected areas agencies:

- **Enhanced Protected and Conserved Area Coverage:** A key pillar of the GBF is Target 3, colloquially known as the 30x30 Target, which sets forth an ambitious agenda to conserve at least 30% of the planet's land and sea areas through protected and conserved areas. PCA agencies will be tasked with expanding the coverage of protected areas, including establishing new PCAs and improving the effective management of existing ones.
- **Ecologically Representative and Well-Connected Protected Area Networks:** The GBF emphasizes the need for protected areas to be ecologically representative and well-connected, ensuring the conservation of a broad range of ecosystems and facilitating species movements in response to environmental changes. Protected areas agencies must play a pivotal role in planning, establishing, and upholding networks of protected areas to meet these requirements.
- **Integrating Conservation and Sustainable Development:** The GBF emphasises the integration of conservation objectives with sustainable development goals. Protected areas agencies must adopt an integrated approach that balances biodiversity conservation with the socio-economic needs of local communities, promoting sustainable livelihoods

and ecosystem services, without compromising the quality of conservation necessary to effectively protect biodiversity.

- **Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Sectors:** The GBF calls for the integration of biodiversity considerations across various sectors, including agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and tourism. Protected areas agencies can actively collaborate with these sectors to ensure their activities align with biodiversity conservation goals and contribute to the sustainable use of natural resources, especially in lands and waters adjacent to protected and conserved areas.
- **Strengthened Governance and Capacity Building:** The framework highlights the importance of effective governance, capacity building, and enhanced financial resources for protected areas agencies. Strengthening institutional frameworks, promoting stakeholder engagement, and investing in training and capacity-building initiatives are vital to support successful implementation. Protected areas agencies can actively advocate for increased financial resources for biodiversity conservation, including exploring innovative financing mechanisms to support PCA management and expansion.

Collaborative approaches to GBF implementation

Given the urgency of the biodiversity crisis and the transformative goals set forth in the GBF, it is imperative that PCA agencies demonstrate global leadership in its implementation. Now that the GBF has been adopted, countries are expected to update their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans by CBD COP16, to be held in Türkiye in 2024.

Collaborative global approaches will be critical to ensuring the success of biodiversity conservation through the implementation of the GBF. Opportunities exist for PCA agencies to collaborate by actively sharing best practices, lessons learned, and success stories to inspire and guide others in achieving the targets of the framework.

It is important to note that the specific contributions of protected areas to these targets may vary depending on regional and national contexts. However, through their leadership, management, and collaboration efforts, protected areas agencies can play a vital role in achieving the targets outlined in the GBF and safeguarding biodiversity for future generations.

Questions for Discussion

- What kind of transformative action can we take as protected areas agencies to implement the GBF, in tandem with our respective National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans?
- How should we leverage WPALF to share knowledge and best practices surrounding GBF implementation at local and global scales?
- What help do we as PCA agencies need to successfully achieve the targets set out in the GBF and to unlock our latent potential?

Background Note

Protected and Conserved Areas Joint Statement on Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss

June 29, 2023 WPALF Day 4, Session 2 (11:00 CEST)

Purpose

This paper provides a briefing on the Protected and Conserved Areas Joint Statement on Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss (the Joint Statement) including a brief summary of the genesis, key themes, recent activity, and next steps.

Context

In the run up to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP26 hosted in Glasgow, Scotland, the UK National Parks – including Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, located only 20 miles from the host city of Glasgow – sought to explore how best to capitalise on being the host country and to support Protected and Conserved Areas (PCAs) engagement in climate dialogue. In consultation with several international PCA organisations including Parks Canada, Europarc, US National Parks Service and the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (IUCN WCPA) it was agreed to draft and publish a Joint Statement on the joint climate change and biodiversity crises. The drafting process engaged well beyond this initial group. This process strengthened references to communities and moved from the confines of climate and UNFCCC to actively bridge the link between climate and biodiversity. The finalised document attracted 26 signatories.

The launch of the Joint Statement took place in the UK Pavilion at COP26 and is prefaced by a challenge, on behalf of the next generation, issued by a Youth Committee and Junior Ranger from Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. The launch was linked to a [coordinated press release](#) shared by signatories from across the world. In anticipation of Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP15 in December 2022, several additional signatories joined the Joint Statement. A copy of the statement is available in **Annex 1**.

Key themes and the wider ambition

The PCA family could be a global actor in the fight against climate change. With ambition increasing for protecting 30% of the planet’s land and waters by 2030, there remains a need for coordinated efforts to tackle climate change mitigation within the lands and waters we as

Protected and Conserved Areas Joint Statement Signatories



Figure 1. Map illustrating distribution of signatories. Note – global organisations (e.g. IUCN WCPA) marked on Antarctica.

PCA agencies steward. In the context of UNFCCC, despite nature-based solutions expected to account for 1/3 of the transition to net-zero by 2050, PCA's are regularly omitted from the conversation. Even in the context of the CBD there is substantial scope to deepen the role that PCA's play and tap into the vast opportunity our family offers.

The Joint Statement therefore set out to:

- Position a new 21st Century role for the PCA family;
- Begin drawing attention to the influential role of PCAs in the dual crises; and to
- Knit our own community even closer together and to gather and galvanise wider support

for PCAs

The statement concludes with a set of commitments each signatory agreed to take forward:

Recent Activity

Since the launch of the Joint Statement, signatories have worked to meet these commitments.

In the buildup to CBD COP15 Parks Canada, with the support of several other signatories,

Our global commitments to address the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss are to:

- a. *Champion a shared view of the role Protected and Conserved Areas can play in the 21st century, and beyond.*
- b. *Engage a powerful and diverse array of authorities, custodians and stewards across governments, the private sector, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities everywhere.*
- c. *Lead efforts to achieve net-zero operations and carbon-rich, biodiverse, and resilient landscapes in our respective geographies.*
- d. *Focus on aspects of our work that drive scale of impact and benefit, including:*
 - *Collaborate and exchange knowledge internationally*
 - *Lever and build our connections with billions of people (visitors and supporters) and communities to inspire behavioural change*
 - *Support a global movement for the deployment and implementation of nature-based solutions at scale, and*
 - *Inspire and enable those working outside Protected and Conserved Areas by linking with initiatives outside our boundaries and sharing our experiences.*

led initial research into carbon and net zero-linked activities across the signatories which was published at COP15 in a talk at the IUCN Pavilion. A summary poster of the findings can be found in **Annex 2**.

COP15 provided an opportunity for several of the signatories to meet and discuss future activities and opportunities for the Joint Statement. Participants in that discussion agreed to instigate the reconvening of the World Protected Area Leaders Forum (WPALF) and to bring the Joint Statement for discussion at the reconvened meeting in Czechia in 2023.

In early 2023, Parks Canada, IUCN WCPA, Korea National Park Service, and Asia Area Partnership have established a workshop series (2 out of 3 complete) exploring Climate Change mitigation in Protected Area: lessons learned from Case Studies. The workshop series includes a focus on:

1. Nature-based Climate Solutions (America, Europa and Africa focus)
2. Emissions reductions from PCA Operations
3. Nature-based Climate Solutions (Asia /Oceania focus)

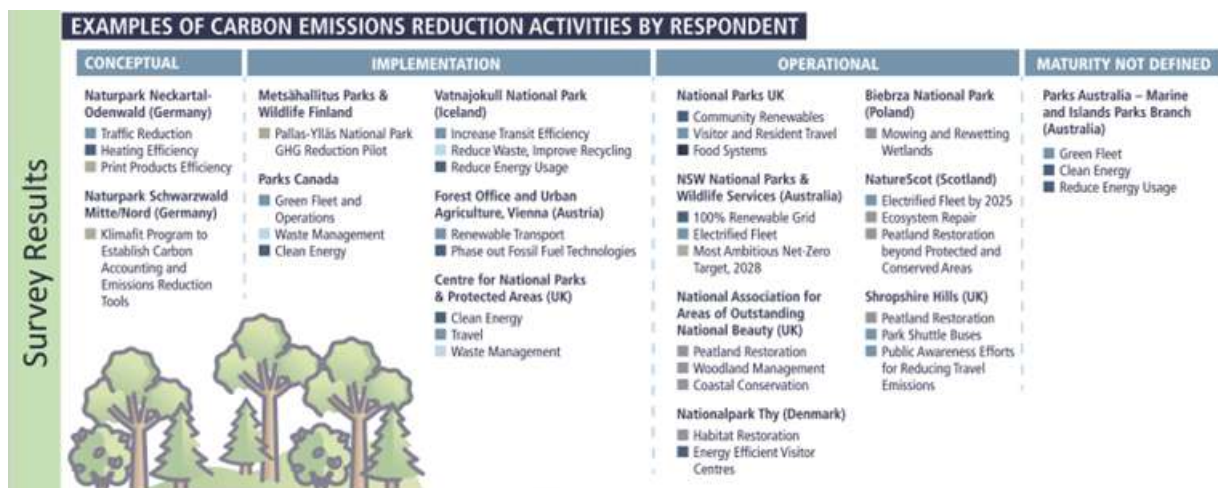


Figure 2. Extract of the Parks Canada research showing examples of Carbon emission activities by signatories.

Next steps

The Joint Statement itself was linked to UNFCCC COP26 and CBD COP15, and whilst the sentiments and ambitions remain valid, it is now time to refresh and revisit this work and to consider what mechanisms are best suited to unlock our ambitions to address the dual crises. As part of this exploration the forthcoming WPALF will consider global leadership on the dual climate and biodiversity crises and the future of WPALF.

Background Note

Developing the WPALF and positioning the forum to help members contribute to global biodiversity and climate goals, including '30x30'

Background

The World Protected Areas Leadership Forum (WPALF) was created in 1999 by IUCN in collaboration with several international protected areas agencies. The first meeting was in the US, hosted by the US Park Service in Virginia, February 2000. WPALF's mission was to 'promote dialogue and exchange of experiences amongst the principal global agencies overseeing protected areas, and to explore ways, through leadership, to improve the effectiveness and conservation results of these protected areas'.

The WPALF is a forum for the leaders of protected areas agencies to discuss the most important issues facing their agencies and to contribute towards the global dialogue on future directions for protected and conserved areas. The WPALF is usually hosted by one of the members' agencies. Participation in the WPALF is by invitation, with the criterion being that the leaders are willing and able to participate as part of this peer group. From time to time, the WPALF invites extra participants from agencies and organisations in the region where they are meeting, either to play a role in the particular meeting or to maintain an ongoing involvement in the WPALF. Although participants are drawn from agencies, they are not officially representing their agencies in the deliberations of the forum. They engage as peers involved in similar work and who face similar challenges that would benefit from dialogue and exchange. WPALF's play an important networking opportunity for PA agency heads.

WPALF objectives, defined in 2002 ahead of the Durban IUCN World Parks Congress (WCC),

have remained as:

- To allow opportunities for heads of PA agencies to discuss items of mutual interest;
- To identify emerging issues and trends in PA area management; and
- To discuss the forward agenda for PA agencies to contribute to the global conservation agenda, including IUCN WCC / WPC events; and
- To enhance and expand personal networks

The most recent in person WPALF, the [11th meeting](#), was held in Victoria, Australia in 2019, hosted by Parks Victoria. The report is available [here](#). The previous meeting was hosted by Israel (10th forum, in Tel Aviv, March 2018). In 2021, New Zealand hosted a virtual discussion, as was also the case in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other events have been held in various locations, including an event held in the context of the Sydney World Parks Congress, in 2014, and a related WPALF event at the 2012 World Conservation Congress in Jeju, Korea. In 2011 the event was hosted by Parques Nacionales de Colombia, and In 2010 by South Africa National Parks (SANParks) in the [Kruger National Park](#). In the early 2000's, a WPALF Steering Group existing and also arranged preparatory meetings, such as one hosted by Finland in June 2004, following on from the Durban World Parks Congress.

The WPALF has always been supported by IUCN, to help facilitate the forum event, and to help with framing reports and recommendations, especially to help feed into IUCN events and congresses. IUCN will contribute and provide advice where invited, but as a rule the WPALF programme is set by the forum members, and the agenda and forum events are the responsibility of the host member agency.

UNFCCC Statement and CBD COP 15

In 2021, a group of Protected Area agency heads and partners co-developed a [joint statement](#) on [protected areas](#) and climate change and presented this to the UNFCCC COP 25 in Glasgow, UK. The statement was also promoted during the UN CBD COP in Montréal, December 2022. The coordination and signing of the statement re-ignited a desire to revitalize the WPALF, find a common forum for PA leaders to share experiences and seek peer-advice and networking opportunities.

Revitalising WPALF

Following the disruptions of COVID-19, the idea to renew WPALF in-person meetings and coordination has become apparent, combining virtual and face-face approaches. The WPLAF can now build on the momentum from the joint statement on protected areas and climate change, a renewed commitment to the WPALF, and to address the opportunities and challenges presented by the new Global Biodiversity Framework and 30x30 ambition.

In this regard, several agencies have expressed interest to engage, support and host events in the coming period. In particular, Czechia has committed to hold the 12th WPALF meeting in June 2023, in Krkonoše National Park.

WPALF membership

At present, there is no formal membership structure and current membership of WPALF is undefined, rather each host invites a number of other agencies to join the forum event; in theory, WPALF is open to any protected area agency head, from anywhere in the world. This

includes sub-national (State, Provincial) agencies, where there is a clear and distinct agency responsibility for protected areas management.

The previous WPALF event hosted 17 agencies, from 9 countries.

It is a clear intent to expand the network and engage more members from around the globe. However, how membership is coordinated, including maintaining a list of relevant contacts and agency leaders, and supporting inter-forum communication and engagement, has been the role of IUCN's secretariat.

Member participation in forum events

The associated costs and logistics of the WPALF events have to date generally precluded a large number of member participants in any one event, except when coinciding with other significant nature conservation events, such as IUCN World Conservation Congresses or CBD COPs.

Invitation to participate in WPALF events should be the mandate of the host, with an eye to logistics and hosting capacity, but also with criteria given to: geographic diversity, agencies with diverse and representative systems of PAs (such as marine, island and SIDS, arid ecosystems, wetland and riverine systems, alpine and montane systems etc); and the leaders' capacity and resources to attend. Sponsorship opportunities for each WPALF event should be a priority planning consideration, to enable good north-south exchange.

Role of IUCN's Protected and Conserved Areas Programme and IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)

The leaders of IUCN's protected areas institutions are supporting members (Chair of World Commission on Protected Areas; Head of IUCN's Global Protected and Conserved Areas programme; Director IUCN Centre for Conservation Action). Participation in the Forum as technical experts and resource persons has always been welcomed by the WPALF members. In addition, IUCN has generally provided support and coordination services for the WPALF, and advice on key thematic priorities and topics, at the invitation of the host agency. However, it is the host who works with other WPALF members to develop a theme and set the agenda, with IUCN very much in a supportive role.

For the 2023 event, IUCN's Global Protected and Conserved Areas Team will deploy staff and resources to support the organisation of the WPALF, in close cooperation with Czechia. IUCN WCPA will provide additional support and advice as needed.

Taking leadership: Czechia to host 12th WPALF event, 2023

The 2023 event will be hosted by the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic and the Administration of the Krkonoše Mountains National Park, 26–30th June 2023. All in-country organisation will be taken care of. Transport and logistics from Prague to the Krkonoše mountains (near Liberec) will be provided.



Krkonoše Mountains National Park have good experience in hosting and facilitating such meetings, including the IUCN WCPA Steering Committee meeting of 2016. It is expected to invite between 25 to 30 WPALF members,

plus local hosts and IUCN support. The agenda is under design and preparations beginning, especially to set the schedule and send out an initial 'save the date' to an initial set of potential invitees.

Finland has already committed to host the 13th event, likely to be in 2024. It will always be important to roster 2-3 hosts in advance, to aid in planning and ensure lessons and momentum are carried from one host to the next.

2023 12th WPLAF Thematic Focus

At this next iteration of the WPLAF meetings, the Czechia hosts will invite a revisit of the mission and purpose of the WPLAF and we will be encouraging dialogue around themes discussed at CBD COP15 in Montreal, such as implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework and the nexus of climate change and biodiversity conservation. There is a plan to present local contextual issues and lessons learned from PA leaders related to climate change in the mountain regions of Central Europe.

Setting the agenda

The Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic and the Administration of the Krkonoše Mountains National Park will seek support from other leading WPLAF members to help set the agenda and finalise the technical development of the event schedule and objectives. IUCN secretariat and IUCN WCPA will support and contribute as relevant to the agenda, and to the preparations of sessions, background materials, platforms for virtual participation facilitation if needed, and in organisational and coordination support.

Expected outcomes from the 12th WPLAF Forum event

The Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic and the Administration of the Krkonoše Mountains National Park would like all interested WPLAF members to help identify the objectives of the 12th event and to help ensure that the following outcomes are achieved:

- Membership is renewed, new commitment are made, enhanced diversity is achieved
- Leaders develop and expand their personal networks and forge new relationships
- The WPLAF is revitalized and members reaffirm its mission and objectives
- Members agree on 2-3 priority actions and initiatives that will address emerging issues and trends in area-based conservation, and contribute to the global conservation agenda and 30x30 ambitions.

Next steps

A WPLAF members virtual meeting will be held in mid-March. Details forthcoming from IUCN. This will help keep WPLAF members engaged and actively contributing, and support the preparations by Czechia in their hosting mission.

Discussion document / draft February 2023

Contact: Mr. JiBoo Park, IUCN Protected and Conserved Areas Team / Korean National Park Service; and Tomáš Růžička, Czech Nature Conservation Agency

Appendix III - List of in-person attendees, WPALF 2023

Name	Country	Agency
Mihaela NASTASE	ROMANIA	National Agency for Natural Protected Areas
Sonam WANGDI	BHUTAN	Nature Conservation Division, Department of Forests and Park Services
Gulshad SHAGIAKHMETOVA	UZBEKISTAN	MNR, Department of Biodiversity and Protected areas
Dr. Rimi REPIN	MALAYSIA	Sabah Parks
Fatimah Binti Simin	MALAYSIA	Sabah Parks
Hyung-Kun SONG	Republic of KOREA	Korea National Park Service
Soyoung PARK	Republic of KOREA	Korea National Park Service
Yunho Choi	Republic of KOREA	Korea National Park Service
Matt JACKSON	AUSTRALIA	Parks Victoria
Jason Mundy	AUSTRALIA	Parks Australia
Property Senzeni MOKOENA	SOUTH AFRICA	SAN Parks
Darlene UPTON	CANADA	Parks Canada
Andrzej RAJ	POLAND	Polish Karkonosze National Park
Henrik JANSSON	FINLAND	Metsähallitus, Finland Parks Agency
Rob STONEMAN	UK	UK Wildlife Trusts
Ladislav MIKO	CZECHIA	Ministry of Environment of the Czech Republic
Jakub KASPAR	CZECHIA	Krkonoše Mts. National Park
Tomas RUZICKA	CZECHIA	Nature Conservation Agency
Michael HOSEK	CZECHIA	Europarc Federation
Robin Böhnisch	CZECHIA	Krkonoše Mts. National Park
František Pelc	CZECHIA	NC Agency
James STUART	Global	One Planet Consulting
Madhu RAO	Global	IUCN WCPA
James HARDCASTLE	Global	IUCN
JiBoo PARK	Global	IUCN
Yves OLATOUNDI	Global	IUCN

Appendix IV – Updated WPALF Terms of Reference

World Protected Areas Leaders Forum Terms of Reference

Revised Draft June 2023

Purpose

The World Protected Areas Leaders Forum (WPALF) role is to ‘promote dialogue and exchange of experiences amongst the principal global agencies overseeing protected areas, and to explore ways, through leadership, to improve the effectiveness of these protected areas’.

The WPALF offers a space for the leaders of Protected and Conserved Areas (PCAs) agencies to share knowledge, to be inspired, to discuss important issues and to contribute towards the global dialogue on future directions for PCAs.

WPALF Membership

WPALF is open to all leaders of area-based conservation authorities and agencies. It is a semi-formal network convened annually by a host country, with support of IUCN and the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA).

Ensuring geographic balance and participant diversity is a key principle of each WPALF event. The IUCN will seek to support this aim through travel support where possible. Typically the meeting will be for 30–40 participants, with online sessions allowing broader participation for key sessions and discussions.

Format

The host and organiser is agreed on a yearly basis and commits to develop and convene the next WPALF forum. The format is determined by the host in liaison with other leaders, the IUCN and WCPA.

WPALF events will identify at least one theme/focus and articulate key objectives/outcomes ahead of the meeting to support leaders to in attending and to help ensure the host benefits.

The event will usually be hosted across 4–6 days and will include meetings, site visits and an insight to the local culture. Participants are expected to cover the costs of travel and accommodation.

WPALF events are an important networking opportunity for PCA heads. WPALF objectives include:

- To allow opportunities for heads of PA agencies to discuss items of mutual interest;
- To share knowledge and learn from others facing similar challenges;
- To be inspired and re-energised;
- To identify emerging issues and trends in PA area management;
- To discuss the forward agenda for PA agencies to contribute to the global conservation agenda, including IUCN WCC / WPC events and CBD meetings; and
- To enhance and expand personal networks

External Links

WPALF meeting will likely further global dialogue relating to key areas of PCA interest. A

communique may be issued from the forum to share some of these key messages. Additionally, the IUCN and the WCPA can also help to advance key messages from the WPALF through its global events.

Secretariat

The IUCN Secretariat will provide basic secretariat support to WPALF events including; capturing and retaining a record of meetings, logistical support to extend the diversity of attendance, maintenance of a database of contacts across the PCA community and advice to the hosts when developing the format and theme. The Secretariat will hold the institutional knowledge of WPALF meetings in cooperation with the WCPA.

The IUCN WCPA will provide technical support to WPALF and will host a dedicated WPALF Special Project/Task Force within its structure. The primary mandate of the Task force is to share existing technical guidance for the implementation of T3 to WPALF members, develop technical guidance materials on newly identified themes, developing a communication mechanism to exchange information, best practice case studies, news and information relevant to the WPALF in between the annual meetings. The ToR of the Task Force will be developed shortly.



Appendix V – Opening Remarks (IUCN WCPA)

Remarks by Madhu Rao, Chair, IUCN WCPA

“Thank you for the opportunity to share some opening remarks. By way of introduction, I am the Chair of the IUCN WCPA - it is my first meeting with the WPALF and I am very excited to be here with all of you.

WCPA is one of IUCN’s 7 technical commissions and has a mandate to provide scientific and technical advice and advocate for effective systems of PCAs across terrestrial, inland water and marine realms.

Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) Target 3 is undeniably ambitious in its scope and intent. The ambition we see in T3 grew from widespread recognition that nature is in crisis and that there is a great sense of urgency to take adequate steps, most importantly, for human well-being.

We have 7 years to reverse declining trends in biodiversity in the context of a rapidly changing climate. We have had much dialogue and debate and it is now time for action on the ground. This is when, as the saying goes, “that the rubber hits the road”.

The success of GBF and T3 lies in implementation at the site and system levels. It lies in ensuring we have effective systems of protected and conserved areas.

The entire PA community will need to step up to the challenge through creative and bold leadership. We have no time to lose, and you all, as global protected area leaders, you are all well positioned to generate strong momentum towards implementation of T3.

So, what would bold and strong global leadership look like?

- 1. The Joint Statement on biodiversity and climate is extremely timely and provides a solid foundation for a powerful collective global voice representing importance of PCAs to achieving biodiversity and climate targets; it is the only one of its kind at the moment.*
- 2. CLIMATE: It is critically important to place PCAs firmly on the climate agenda - for both mitigation and adaptation; as much of the climate financing will be critical for biodiversity and PCAs. It will be equally important to make PCAs ready for the impacts of climate change. Protected and conserved areas will face significant changes in the coming decades as species and ecosystems move due to climate change;*
- 3. MAINSTREAMING: We need to continue to raise the profile of PCAs - Parks are not just pretty places on a map - PCAs have multiple economic benefits for people, from food security to regulating climate. We can and should place PCAs on the human health agenda - from preventing pandemics to supporting mental well-being - there is now solid evidence that PCAs are critical to human health. There is good evidence to show that PCAs help strengthen governance and promote peace and human security in many contexts. We have a unique opportunity to mainstream biodiversity and PCAs into other sectors.*
- 4. We have significant opportunity to build on advancements in science and technologies while drawing on traditional knowledge and ground-up approaches in developing effective*

solutions. We need to integrate the vast body of existing science and knowledge into policies and decision-making.

5. *We have experience from implementing Target 11 so we know broadly where the gaps are and what we should be emphasising on. We are well positioned to avoid past mistakes. The WPALF is an opportunity for us to come together as a community of practice.*

Protected and conserved area agencies are well positioned - in one direction, they are mandated with the implementation of national PA policy in alignment with international policy commitments; PCAs are also linked directly to civil society and have an important role to play in outreach and awareness of the general public and promote ambitious national targets for biodiversity and climate.

IUCN can help in 3 ways:

1. *Administrative and logistical support for the convening and organisation alongside host agencies.*
2. *Technical support: Target 3/30x30 is at the heart of the work and mandate of IUCN and WCPA.*
 - a. *WCPA just completed our annual steering committee meeting in Kyrgyzstan and we have endorsed an ambitious programme of work for PCAs.*
 - b. *We also have a vast body of technical guidance from OECMs, corridors and ecological connectivity to capacity building for rangers; sustainable financing.*
 - c. *What can IUCN do to make your job easier and to support the enormous task we all have in front of us? Please let us know and we'll be delighted to help.*
3. *IUCN can help bring WPALF into broader coalitions- such as the HAC, the CoP28 etc.*

In closing, I would like to say that WPALF can be a very powerful and unique voice and platform to advance the implementation of global biodiversity and climate commitments building on the opportunity to stir up global momentum toward better stewardship of Nature."

Madhu Rao, Chair IUCN WCPA Opening remarks to 12th WPALF