



MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

External Review

IUCN Programme 2021-2024

April 2024



Evaluand identification data

Evaluand title:	External Review of the IUCN Programme 2021-2024	
Date started:	26.07.23	
Date closed:	01.03.24	
Evaluand manager:	Programme/office:	
Lucile de Boisson	IPME	Institutional Performance Management and Evaluation

Management Response Summary Data

Evaluation or review title as it appears on final report: External Review of the IUCN Programme 2021-2024	Date Management Response approved: Executive Board of IUCN
Date received: February 2024	Last progress update: April 16, 2024
All units/positions requested to take action: IUCN Executive Board, Centres & Regions, Institutional Performance Management and Evaluation Unit, Strategic Partnership Unit, Science and Knowledge Centre, Membership and Commission Support Unit, Finance, Human Rights in Conservation, Protected and Conserved Areas	
Expected duration required to fully implement the MR: November 2024, April 2025	

Background

This External Review is jointly commissioned by the IUCN's Director General and Framework Partners as part of multi-year Framework Agreements signed by both parties. This type of External Review has been conducted every four years since 1991 and focuses on the implementation of the IUCN Programme. It is typically undertaken prior to the World Conservation Congress and the final report is presented to the IUCN Members at the Congress.

The objective of the review is to evaluate the overall performance of the IUCN Intersessional Programme considering relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact to ensure the accountability of IUCN towards its Council, Framework Partners, constituents, donors, and other stakeholders, and to provide lessons learned that will generate actionable recommendations for further implementation of the Programme. Reported to the next IUCN World Conservation Congress, the External Review will also be used in the design of the next IUCN intersessional programme.

IUCN's response

IUCN welcomes the External Review and its recommendations as the basis for a strengthened 2026-2029 IUCN Programme.

We welcome the recognition of IUCN's Programme relevance and coherence with IUCN Membership and with the global nature conservation agenda. We also welcome the conclusions on IUCN's efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability in delivering the work aligned with the Programme. The review makes a number of relevant recommendations that IUCN will work on implementing over the next two years with the support of its governance and Framework Partners.

Evaluation Recommendations	IUCN Management Response	Key actions in response	Intended Result	Resp. unit	Timeframe
<p>Recommendation 1: Realign on the purpose and role of the Nature 2030 Programme in directing IUCN’s work.</p> <p><u>Action 1.1:</u> The Union, in application of IUCN Regulations 2 and 2bis should clarify and communicate better on what the Programme is for, who is responsible for delivering it, and how (if at all) progress should be reported.</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p> <p>We agree that the programme will retain a core function of providing high-level guidance and a description of work, but a high-level directional framework is also needed upon which operational strategies can be established.</p> <p>This will be facilitated through the development of a Theory of Change (see recommendation 2) along with an accompanying results framework to demonstrate how IUCN’s actions contribute to the attainment of the programme’s goals.</p> <p>The development and delivery of the Programme is a joint endeavour across the Union, with relevant roles and responsibilities captured in IUCN’s statutes and Council Handbook: the IUCN Council sets strategic priorities for the development of the draft programme. The draft IUCN Programme is submitted to members for consultation and to Congress for decision/approval by Members. This is also an opportunity to fully exchange with members on roles, responsibilities and purpose of the programme.</p> <p>The Secretariat is responsible for the implementation of the policy and the programme of IUCN as established by the World Conservation Congress and the Council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shape the 2026-2029 programme structure and narrative to address all elements of the Theory of Change (ToC) (see recommendation 2 below), rather than limiting representation of the ToC to a single diagrammatic representation. - Closely coordinate between the Programme Development Working Group and the 20-year Vision writing group to ensure coherence/ consistency. - Frame the 2026 - 2029 programme to include desired outcomes within IUCN’s ‘area of influence’ and set out high-level outputs under IUCN’s ‘area of action’, as defined in Regulation 2 and 2bis, captured within a clear Theory of Change and accompanying results framework. - Present and consult the 20-year Vision and the Draft 2026-2029 programme with members to ensure coherence between the two is understood and maintained. - Optimize existing arrangements (revising where necessary) under IUCN’s annual accountability requirements to clarify and communicate who is 	<p>The 2026-2029 programme will have a clear logic that describes (1) the high-level direction of travel (aligning with the 20-year vision) - framed in terms of IUCN’s “area of influence” - and (2) directs collective action within IUCN’s “area of action” which can be reported against. A Theory of Change and accompanying results framework will capture this logic and provide the framework for the Programme. This structure is intended to improve clarity on the respective roles of constituent parts of IUCN.</p>	<p>Executive Board</p> <p>Programme Development Working Group</p> <p>Centres/ Regions/ IPME</p>	<p>May 2025</p>

	<p>While a Theory of Change and an agreed results framework will facilitate better and more coherent reporting across component parts of the Union, there is no practical mechanism to guarantee a full accounting of the Union's efforts. The Secretariat will continue to report annually to Council and quadrennially to Congress on progress in programme implementation as per the Council Handbook.</p>	<p>responsible for delivering the Programme, how it should be delivered and reported on.</p>			
<p>Recommendation 2: Build a Programme Theory of Change.</p> <p><u>Action 2.1:</u> The Secretariat should lead the process by formulating a draft Theory of Change.</p>	<p>Accepted</p> <p>A Theory of Change and accompanying Results Framework will be developed for the 2026-2029 Programme in order to clearly demonstrate how IUCN's actions contribute to the attainment of the programme's goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adapt the 2026-2029 Programme Development process to integrate development of a Theory of Change, supported by a ToC facilitator and illustrator (secure funds) - Inform the 2026-2029 Programme development group - Mobilise staff time from the Institutional Performance Management and Evaluation unit to support the development of a ToC - Create an organisational impact scorecard and secure funds to create a dashboard for monitoring. 	<p>The 2026-2029 programme includes a Theory of Change that outlines causal linkages between IUCN's catalytic role and the intended results/impacts of the programme. The Theory of Change is supported by a results framework, an organisational impact scorecard, and a portal upgrade to systematically capture the common indicators within the results framework.</p> <p>The programme will include a section with high-level expected contributions by constituency.</p>	<p>Executive Board</p> <p>Programme Development Group</p> <p>IPME</p>	<p>2024</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: Recalibrate the Prioritised Programme</p>	<p>Accepted – while noting that Council has requested some demonstrated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme areas will explicitly incorporate outcomes that 	<p>The 2026-2029 programme will be clearly</p>	<p>Programme Development</p>	

<p>Areas in the next iteration of Nature 2030.</p> <p><u>Action 3.1:</u> The Union capitalise on Regional Consultation Forums to initiate an internal consultation across its Constituents to identify new Programme areas.</p> <p><u>Action 3.2:</u> IUCN should streamline the Programme.</p> <p><u>Action 3.3:</u> IUCN may wish to undertake a ‘horizon scanning’ exercise.</p>	<p>continuity with the 2021-2024 programme.</p> <p>3.1 Accepted</p> <p>3.2 Accepted</p> <p>3.3 Accepted</p>	<p>speaking to the 20-year vision’s transformational areas, alongside the upscaling of conservation impact on land, water and oceans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3.1 Proposed focus areas within the programme (and 20-year Vision) will be consulted with Members during the Regional Conservation Fora in a coherent manner. - 3.2 The structure of the programme document will be simplified with each section clearly linked to an aspect of the Theory of Change. - 3.3 The draft programme will incorporate horizon scanning elements from Chapter 2 of the 20-year vision. - A more deliberative foresight / horizon scanning exercise will be included as an output of the 2026-2029 programme which will inform key directions for the 2030-2033 programme, in line with the 20-year strategic vision. 	<p>framed as the first quadrennial period for the delivery of the 20-year vision, integrating work on the transformational areas identified in the Vision. It will also serve as a coherent and directional transition from the 2021-2024 programme.</p>	<p>Working Group</p> <p>Centres/ Regions/ IPME</p>	
<p>Recommendation 4: IUCN should include a strategy to operationalise the Programme</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4.1: the 2026-2029 programme document will incorporate a section that will summarise expected high-level contributions by constituency. 	<p>Overall – the 2026-2029 programme document will describe “how” the Union will mobilise its</p>	<p>Programme Development Working Group</p>	

<p>in its next quadrennial Programme document.</p> <p><u>Action 4.1:</u> As part of the next Programme document, include a section to demonstrate how Constituents intend to contribute to the Programme.</p> <p><u>Action 4.2:</u> Align the budget with the next iteration of the Programme.</p>	<p>4.1 Accepted</p> <p>4.2 Partially accepted. As per IUCN statutes a Financial Plan for the programme period is approved by Members on a quadrennial basis. Council reviews and approves annual budgets. It is only possible to ascertain the Secretariat's financial contribution to the Programme. It is not possible to ascertain the expected financial contributions of the Members to the programme's objectives. It is also difficult to assess the financial contributions of the Commissions due to the voluntary nature of their work.</p>	<p>This will not be a separate strategy but will be integrated into the programme itself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The consultation with members throughout Regional Conservation Fora will explore and capture how members (by region) would like to support major deliverables. <p>4.2 The Financial Plan will be mapped to the Programme in respect of the Secretariat's contribution to the Programme as per IUCN Statutes.</p>	<p>constituent parts for implementation.</p> <p>4.1 The 2026-2029 Programme will aim to provide a high level results framework that will allow constituent parts of IUCN to demonstrate / report on their contributions in a consistent and coherent manner, recognizing that there is no mechanism to ensure that this is done consistently.</p> <p>4.2 the Quadrennial Financial Plan and annual budgets will align with the Secretariat's contribution to the Programme</p>	<p>Centres/ Regions/ IPME/ MCSU</p> <p>CFO</p>	<p>2024/25</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: Strengthen results monitoring and reporting practices.</p> <p><u>Action 5.1:</u> Continue to build an aggregated reporting system for the Secretariat.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>5.1 These efforts are currently ongoing and will be completed by mid-2024. This includes a 2021-2024 results architecture, a digital results planning and monitoring module, an indicator atlas, among others. Please also see the response in 2.1</p>	<p>5.1 IUCN has the capacity to report against key Programme and operational dimensions at all levels (e.g. project, country, regional and global levels).</p>	<p>Centres/ Regions</p> <p>IPME</p>	<p>Programme adoption</p>

<p><u>Action 5.2</u>: Continue to encourage usage / uptake of the Contributions for Nature Platform amongst Members.</p> <p><u>Action 5.3</u>: Continue to build an aggregated reporting system for Commissions.</p>	<p>5.2 Accepted</p> <p>5.3 Partially accepted</p> <p>An aggregated reporting system for Commissions will help increase alignment of the work across the Commissions and with the Secretariat. However, there are pre-requisites which are currently lacking:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The IUCN Programme needs to provide an adequate foundation on which to report results (see page 11 of external review). 2. Increased integrated planning of work across Commissions and with the Secretariat. 3. Clear understanding and alignment with the Commissions on reporting requirements and accountability. 4. It would be more accurate to say “Build an aggregated reporting system for Commissions” (rather than ‘continue to build’...) as currently there is no aggregated reporting system. 	<p>This aggregated reporting system will be supported by capacity strengthening efforts for project teams.</p> <p>A results framework is currently under construction for the 2026-2029 programme.</p> <p>5.3 The Commission Chairs and Secretariat collaboratively revise Annex 2 of the Council Handbook in order to build a stronger and integrated planning and reporting framework that includes the work of Commissions and helps capture the impact of Commission’s work.</p> <p>Together with Commission Chairs, agree on the best way to incorporate Commission’s results (using common indicators developed for the 2026-2029 Program) into the overall reporting.</p>	<p>5.2 IUCN reports in the period 2026 - 2029 will capture collective progress on potential conservation gains and support profiling of members’ contributions.</p> <p>5.3 A more cohesive and integrated implementation of the IUCN Programme across Commissions and Secretariat</p>	<p>Science and Knowledge Centre / MSCU</p> <p>Commission Chairs, DG, MCSU, Governance, IPME</p>	<p>2026-2029</p> <p>2024-25</p>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------

<p>Recommendation 6: Reflect on the scope and purpose of the next Programme evaluation.</p> <p><u>Action 6.1:</u> We strongly encourage IUCN to conduct an internal evaluability assessment.</p> <p><u>Action 6.2:</u> Undertake an on-going learning review of the Programme.</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p> <p>6.1 Partially accepted</p> <p>A light internal evaluability assessment is usually conducted at the launch of every External Review. This is done looking more specifically at the Programme objectives, the available documentation, degree of stakeholders' engagement and most importantly taking into account the accountability and assurance requirements of the External Review for IUCN's Framework Partners. The evaluability of the programme should improve as we implement the recommendations from this External Review within the next Programme design. When we finalize the development of the next program it might make sense to put this lens already and have a final touch so that the next program itself would improve evaluability.</p> <p>6.2 Partially accepted</p> <p>IUCN is ready to support this idea if the proposed approach meets the accountability and assurance needs of donors.</p> <p>IUCN would prefer to maintain the External Review as the main accountability driven exercise for the four year programme and have access to unrestricted funding to drive learning on thematic priorities, etc.</p>	<p>6.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss and confirm accountability and assurance needs of IUCN's Framework Partners - Improve evaluability of the program by addressing some of the recommendations in the new program design. 	<p>6.1</p> <p>Clear External Review scope and purpose.</p> <p>6.2</p> <p>Idem</p>	<p>SPU</p> <p>Program development group</p> <p>IPME</p>	<p>2024</p>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------	-------------

<p>Recommendation 7: Strengthen GESI practices across the Union.</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p> <p>Strengthening GESI can be done within the Secretariat but will require a more systematic provisioning and apportioning of Portfolio resources to secure dedicated time of internal Human Rights, Gender, Indigenous Peoples, Capacity Building expertise. The extent to which this can be achieved globally within the Union will primarily be determined by the policies and capacities of individual members as well as the degree of alignment and integration of the future reporting capacity that Members are prepared to accept (as mentioned above)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish and implement a fully costed framework for the systematic recovery of GESI mainstreaming functions across the portfolio with predictable re-allocations made to the necessary internal support roles to enable progressive year-on-year work planning. - Agree with donors in advance that IUCN will recover the costs of delivering GESI services as an earmarked direct charge. - Establish a four-year roadmap for progressively strengthening the mainstreaming and delivery of GESI services across the portfolio, including further strengthening of policies (see 7.4 and 7.5) - Progressively roll-out a mandatory GESI training programme for all IUCN Secretariat programme staff and make available to IUCN members. - Incorporate GESI metrics into the IUCN reporting framework and senior programme staff's scorecards. 	<p>IUCN effectively mainstreams GESI across its portfolio-related operations, systematically implementing and reporting on its existing GESI-related policies – including resolutions - (gender, inclusion, application of free prior and informed consent etc) while ensuring all project budgets contribute to the maintenance of these functions.</p> <p>Training courses through the IUCN Academy on the application of GESI policies are mandatory for all programme staff in Regions and Centres and made available across the wider Union network.</p>	<p>Executive Board</p> <p>HRC team</p> <p>KMLLS team</p> <p>IPME</p> <p>Centre and Regional Directors</p> <p>Finance</p> <p>SPU</p>	<p>2025–2029</p>
<p>Action 7.1: Strengthen Gender Empowerment and Inclusion with M&E System.</p>	<p>7.1 Accepted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7.1 Include GESI aspects within the results architecture and the IUCN Indicator Atlas. Both will enable and facilitate GESI mainstreaming across the Secretariat. 		<p>IPME</p> <p>HRC</p>	<p>2024-2026</p>

<p><u>Action 7.2</u>: Continue to empower Indigenous Leadership.</p>	<p>7.2 Accepted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7.2 Continue to build and strengthen co-designed mechanisms and instruments that move beyond safeguarding mechanisms to those that support leadership among IUCN Indigenous members to deploy the agency of their communities (as an expression of self-determination) in operationalising conservation and natural resource action – including more direct access to financial resources. - Co-design and test a roadmap for a voluntary framework to help address conservation human rights legacy issues 		<p>HRC PCA Regions</p>	
<p><u>Action 7.3</u>: Better mainstream GESI across the Programme.</p>	<p>7.3 Accepted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7.3 IUCN project budgeting and financial management process systematically makes provision for, recovers and allocates in a predictable manner, resources to specialised teams required to support GESI mainstreaming including HRC, KMLSS, IPME as well as enhanced capacity in Regions and Centres - GESI training to be provided to all teams and units. GESI scorecard metrics included in the "dashboard" for all senior programme (Director and Manager level) 			
	<p>7.4 Partially accepted</p>				

<p><u>Action 7.4</u>: Develop an inclusivity policy for Marginalised Groups.</p>	<p>IUCN has already a wealth of guidance and general policy (resolutions) on inclusion, respecting rights and agency of, and engaging with marginalised groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7.4 Collate existing IUCN policy, resolutions and guidelines on inclusivity and marginalised groups, identifying and addressing any gaps. - Prepare best practice guidance to operationalise the above - Develop training courses for IUCN Secretariat staff and make available to wider membership. 			
<p><u>Action 7.5</u>: Develop a comprehensive Human Rights Framework.</p>	<p>7.5 Partially accepted IUCN has already a wealth of guidance and general policy (resolutions) on human rights and conservation that now needs to be systematically operationalised.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7.5 Collate existing IUCN policy, resolutions and guidelines on human rights in conservation, identifying and addressing any gaps. - Prepare best practice guidance to operationalise the above - Develop training courses for IUCN Secretariat staff and make available to wider membership. <p>7.5</p>			