



Permanent Mission of the
International Union for Conservation of Nature
to the United Nations

High-Level Meeting on Sand and Dust Storms

General Debate

Statement delivered by the Permanent Observer of IUCN to the UN, Dr Sofie Jaffe

New York, 10 July 2025

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, I am honoured to address this High-Level Meeting convened to confront one of the most pressing and under-recognized environmental challenges of our time—sand and dust storms.

The declaration of the United Nations Decade on Combating Sand and Dust Storms (2025–2034) is a timely and vital initiative. Sand and dust storms are not only extreme weather events, they are symptoms of deeper ecological imbalances—land degradation, desertification, and climate change. These storms threaten biodiversity, human health, food security, and the resilience of ecosystems across continents.

IUCN recognizes that 25% of global dust emissions are linked to human activities, including poor land management and water use. This underscores the urgent need for nature-based solutions as a concrete implementation approach to manage their risks. We urgently need to scale up efforts to restore degraded lands through reforestation, agroforestry, and sustainable grazing practices, as well as protect dryland ecosystems, which serve as natural buffers against sand and dust storms. In all these efforts there must be a focus on community-led conservation efforts that empower indigenous peoples and local communities to steward their landscapes and utilize traditional and indigenous knowledge.

In addition, it is essential to make the link between managing sand and dust storms and sustainable water management, as sand and dust storms are often linked to unsustainable water management practises. The 2026 UN Water Conference provides a key moment to galvanize action in this regard.

We call for enhanced collaboration among governments, civil society, and scientific institutions. IUCN stands ready to contribute its expertise in ecosystem restoration, policy guidance, and capacity building as a member of the UN Coalition on sand and dust storms.

We warmly welcome you all to the World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi in October to continue discussions on this and other important topics.

Let this Decade be a turning point—where we move from reactive responses to proactive resilience, from degradation to restoration, and from fragmented efforts to unified action.

Thank you.
