



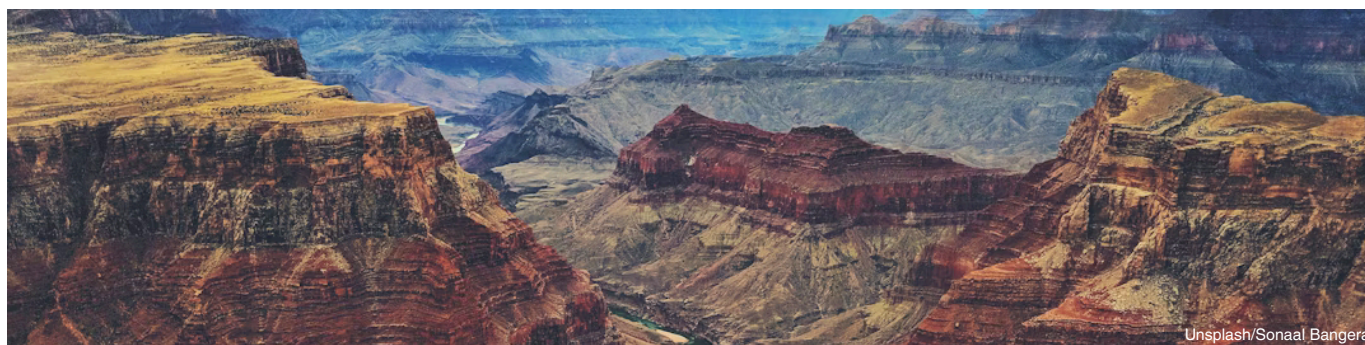
IUCN Forest and Grasslands Team: 2025 Year in Review



Unsplash/Alex Ip

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Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
FGT	IUCN Forests and Grasslands Team
GEF	Global Environment Fund
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on Forests
IUCN Congress	IUCN World Conservation Congress
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
COP30	The 30 th Convening of the UNFCCC Conference of Parties
IKI	International Climate Initiative
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
DSL-IP	Dryland Sustainable Landscapes - Impact Program
FLR	Forest Landscape Restoration
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
FERM	Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring
KMGBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
ARID	Accelerating Action for Resilience and Innovation in Drought Risk Management
ADA	Austrian Development Agency
NbS	Nature-based Solutions
UN Decade	UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration
BMUKN	Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (Germany)
IMFN	International Model Forest Network
CS4LDN	The Civil Society for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)
CRIC23	The 23rd Convening of the Committee on the Review of Implementation of the UNCCD
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding

Meet the Team



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Our Focus

Forests and grasslands are indispensable ecosystems that serve as the foundation of a healthy planet. These vital landscapes harbour spectacular biodiversity, including at least 80% of the world's terrestrial biodiversity species, are crucial to **water cycles, food security and climate regulation**, and provide essential resources and livelihoods for communities globally. However, these ecosystems are under threat.

In line with *Nature 2030: One Nature, One Future*; *The IUCN Programme 2026-2029*; and the *Rio Conventions*, the IUCN Forest and Grasslands Team (FGT) strives for a world where **resilient communities thrive in harmony with conserved and restored forests, grasslands, and other terrestrial ecosystems**. This report will serve as summary of FGT's efforts in 2025 to protect, conserve, and restore our planet's terrestrial landscapes.

Our strategy is centred around the connection between policy and on-the-ground action. We focus on empowering diverse communities to implement and scale-up conservation action that considers biodiversity, ecosystem services, and sustainable livelihood development through collaboration with governments, the private sector, scientists, and local stakeholders.

Pillar 1

Intact Ecosystems:
Scaling protection and conservation of native and intact terrestrial ecosystems

Pillar 2

Degraded Ecosystems:
Advancing implementation of large-scale ecosystem restoration as part of multifunctional landscapes

Pillar 3

People: Empowering vulnerable communities and building resilience through innovation



Project Achievements

Pillar 1: Protecting and Conserving Intact Ecosystems

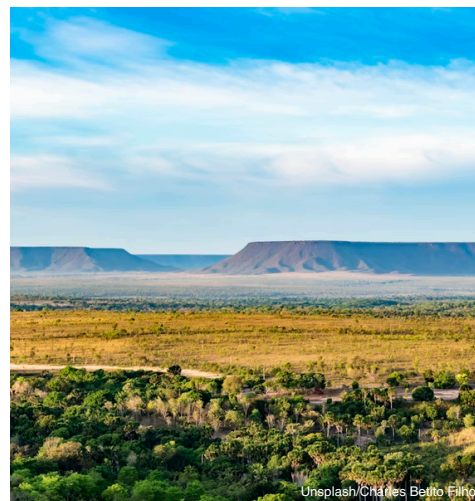


Primary Forests

Funded by GEF, and implemented by IUCN and Members of CPF, this joint initiative elevates the importance of primary forests in global discourse. In 2025, FGT hosted events on primary forests at major convenings like the IUCN Congress and the UNFCCC COP30 to promote the conservation of these ecosystems to policymakers, while also organising a partner workshop in Washington, DC in September.

IKI Grasslands

The IKI Grasslands project “Safeguarding Overlooked Ecosystems” aims to protect grassland ecosystems across South America. This year, FGT and the Regional Office for South America co-launched the Latin America Regional Knowledge Platform, the first grassland and savannah dedicated knowledge management effort led by IUCN. Building upon this project, FGT will conduct in-person events, engaging focal points from UNCCD, CSOs, and NGOs, through capacity building workshops.



DSL-IP

With the support of GEF, DSL-IP aims to bring 12 million hectares of drylands under sustainable land management. In 2025, FGT co-organized 3 regional workshops in Mongolia, Mozambique, and Burkina Faso, bringing together over 124 experts from 14 countries to strengthen regional partnerships, advance dialogue on sustainable land management and biodiversity conservation, and facilitate the exchange of experiences and technical knowledge.

Project Achievements

Pillar 2: Restoring Degraded Ecosystems

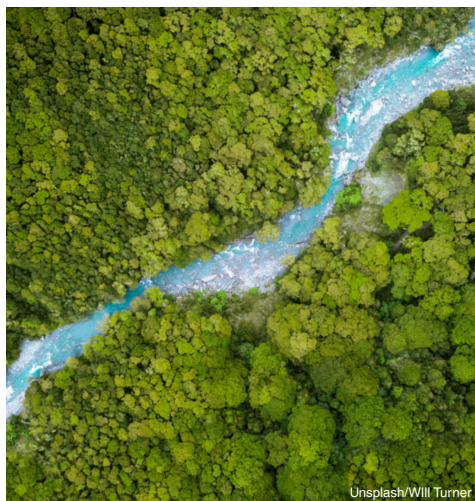


FLR Hub

The FLR Hub aims to accelerate and scale up global FLR implementation. This year, six FLR Hub partner countries successfully developed their first annual workplans and budgets. This milestone marked the transition of the FLR Hub from inception to implementation and laid the foundation for coordinated restoration action in 2026, while ensuring accountability against project objectives and enabling partner mobilisation. In 2025, FGT also mobilized funding from SDC to ensure the project's future success.

Bonn Challenge

The Bonn Challenge is a global initiative to restore 350 million hectares of deforested and degraded land by 2030. This year, FGT, together with Germany, held a UNFCCC COP30 high level event to discuss the importance of forest restoration, and mobilised funds from BMUKN to ensure the long-term success of the global initiative and its visibility and communication.



Restoration Barometer

The Restoration Barometer was launched in 2016 to track progress towards global restoration commitments. In 2025, FGT started the work to expand the platform's scope to better align with KMGBF Target 2 and organized data from 4 countries to correspond the IUCN Global Ecosystems Typology 2.0. Furthermore, through efforts at CBD regional capacity building workshops, FGT worked to update the Restoration Barometer reporting schema to better support FERM and KMGBF.

Project Achievements

Pillar 2: Restoring Degraded Ecosystems

ARID

This year, FGT launched ARID, funded by the ADA. This project will foster innovation at the land-water-drought nexus by promoting NbS and emphasising ecosystem restoration as a mechanism to address degraded landscapes and biodiversity loss posed by drought in Burkina Faso, Georgia, and Kenya. Through policy engagement and community collaboration, this project will also build resilience, encourage gender-responsive approaches, and generate socioeconomic benefits.



UN Decade Science Task Force

Convened by IUCN, the Science Task Force is the authoritative science reference point for the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration: acting as a support system and peer-reviewing network for the UN Decade's advisory board, strategy group, and World Restoration Flagships. The Science Task Force was reestablished in 2025, increasing Flagship visibility, showcasing expert papers, collaborating with other UN Decade Task Forces, and producing new knowledge products.

UN Decade Ecosystem Restoration Hub

Launched in 2025, the UN Decade Ecosystem Restoration Hub is a digital meeting place of the ecosystem restoration movement. The Hub highlights successful strategies and projects, creating a community of restoration leadership, implementation, and education. In 2025, IUCN, as a Global Partner to the UN Decade, amplified the Hub to the Union while publishing IUCN Secretariat and Member initiatives to the platform.



Project Achievements

Pillar 3: Empowering People and Communities



IMFN

IUCN and IMFN are collaborating to advance gender-responsive FLR in Model Forests across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In 2025, FGT distributed success stories from several Model Forests, highlighting the leadership of local women, green value chains, and community-driven forest management innovations. FGT also developed guidance on how communities can better integrate gender and equity into Model Forest governance, management, and restoration.

Agroecology

The IUCN agroecology project focuses on the restoration and sustainable management of productive landscapes to build a bridge between the agriculture and conservation. In 2025, an evidence package of community-led practices by farmers and pastoralists entitled “Agroecology in Dryland Mosaic Landscapes” was developed into a coherent story of system change to be used in policy spaces.



CS4LDN

The CS4LDN initiative seeks to enhance the capacity of civil society organisations worldwide to implement LDN policies and initiatives. In 2025, FGT consolidated reports on funding barriers for CSOs, synthesising responses from 226 CSOs working on drylands, and translating scattered experiences into a clear typology of barriers and entry points for donors. This provides a concrete evidence base to redesign support instruments and improve access to finance in 2026.

Events and Engagements



In line with our goals to build stakeholder capacity, advance policy dialogue, and translate ambition to action alongside partners and donors, FGT organised and attended various events in 2025, including:

IUCN World Conservation Congress

Held every four years, the IUCN Congress brings together thousands of leaders and decision-makers from across the conservation community. This year, FGT organised four exhibition events;

- Enhancing Financial Mechanisms for Primary Forest Conservation
- Scaling Integrated Approaches for Drylands and Drought Resilience
- Restoring Our Future: Lessons and Innovations to Achieve Global Restoration Goals
- Uniting for Grasslands, Savannahs and Rangelands: A Call to Collective Action

Beyond this, FGT engaged in important discussions with Mongolian Ministry of Environment, resulting in the signing of an MoU between IUCN and Mongolia.

UNFCCC COP30

At COP30, FGT participated in high-level engagement through leadership, organization, and moderation of policy dialogues and technical sessions. These sessions positioned forest landscape restoration, primary forests, and wildfire risks as central to global climate and biodiversity agendas



Events and Engagements

UNFF Country-Led Initiative

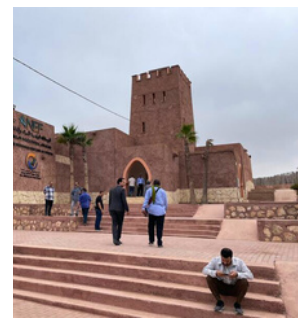
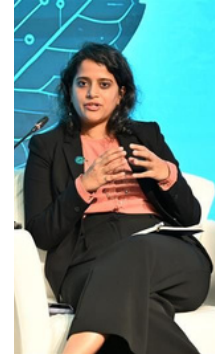
In 2025, FGT participated in two UNFF Country-Led Initiative events. At the first, hosted in Agadir, FGT presented “Innovating Forest Governance: IUCN’s Approach to Technology, Transparency, and Transformation” to highlight the growing demand for standardised science-based approaches to forest governance. At the next, hosted in Istanbul, FGT discussed opportunities in wildfire resilience and post-fire restoration.

FLR Hub Steering Committee Meeting

In September, IUCN convened the second FLR Hub Steering Committee in Berlin, bringing together core partners WRI and WWF and governance bodies (BMUKN, SDC, ZUG) to review progress and agree on the way forward for implementation. The meeting was a key milestone in consolidating strategic alignment, enabling the FLR Hub to move decisively from design to implementation in 2026.

One Health Workshop

One Health is an integrated approach to health that recognizes the interdependence of human health, animal health, and environmental health. In November, FGT attended a One Health workshop co-organised by the FCDO and the Brazilian Government. As one of the few conservation organizations present, FGT played an important role in advocating for the role of One Health in conservation.



Events and Engagements



CRIC23

CRIC23 served as an important opportunity to discuss how best to combat desertification with leading organizations and countries. FGT hosted three events at CRIC bringing together practice, research, knowledge management, communication and policy experts. FGT also engaged with conversations with the UNCCD secretariat, resulting in the signing of an MoU later that month.



IMFN Global Forum

FGT participated in the IMFN Global Forum bringing together members to increase stakeholder engagement, launch protocol, and build capacity for 200+ IMFN stakeholders from 60 Model Forests. At the event, FGT hosted two events focusing on the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and Gender Equality and Empowerment respectively.



Désertif' action Preparatory Workshop

As part of the larger CS4LDN project, FGT led a session on Agroecology for sustainable rangelands and organized a field visit to pastoralist communities practising sustainable agroecological approaches. These field visits are crucial for building real relationships with communities and places and promoting the funding of long-term stewardship.



Knowledge Products

Crucial to ensuring the longevity of conservation and restoration is ensuring that communities around the world have the **tools, skills, and knowledge to protect our planet**. FGT was dedicated to this mission in 2025, developing and disseminating diverse knowledge products across our portfolio. These include:



- [A gender-forward forest landscape restoration \(FLR\) incubation and acceleration protocol for use in community-managed forest landscapes](#)
- [Lessons and Challenges of a Restoration Flagship: The Trinational Atlantic Forest Pact](#)
- [Indigenous Territories can safeguard human health depending on the landscape structure and legal status](#)
- [The Amazon Assessment Report 2025: Connectivity of the Amazon for a Living Planet](#)
- [From Roots to Riches: Priority Policy and Investment Decisions for Grasslands and Savannahs.](#)
- [Protecting the overlooked carbon sink: A policy agenda for grasslands](#)
- [How to Ensure Social Outcomes in Restoration](#)
- [A Pan-Amazonian dataset integrating 20 years of respiratory, cardiovascular, zoonotic and vector-borne disease cases and landscape changes](#)

FGT in the Press

This year, FGT increased outreach and communications efforts, aiming to convey successes, opportunities, and achievements to partners, donors, and communities with whom we work. FGT published **26 web articles** in 2025. Notable FGT press releases and web stories from 2025 include:



Preserving Earth's last sanctuaries: A call for urgent action on primary forests



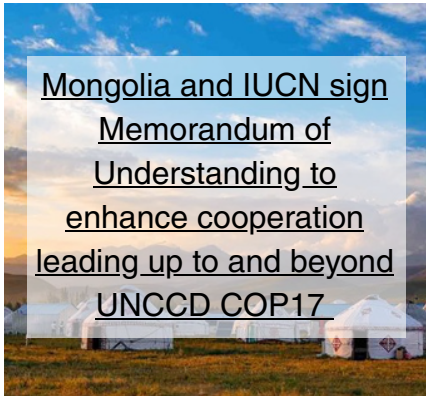
Switzerland boosts forest landscape restoration across Africa and South America with CHF 5.2 million contribution



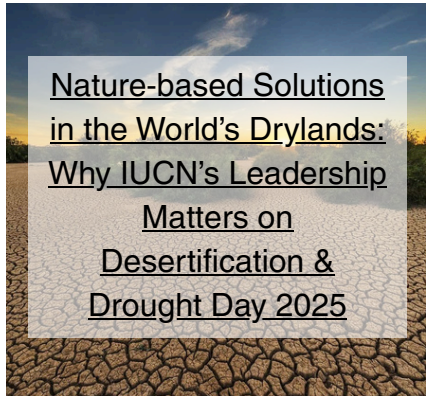
Germany and IUCN celebrate 15 years of the Bonn Challenge, the world's largest restoration initiative



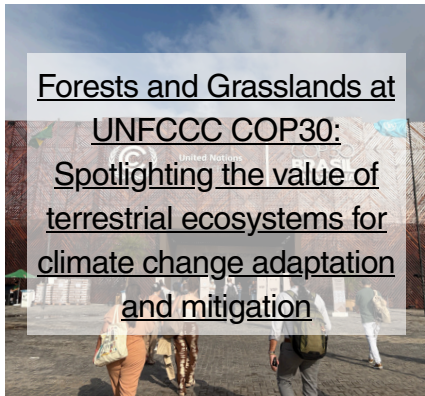
IUCN and UNCCD strengthen cooperation ahead of UNCCD COP17



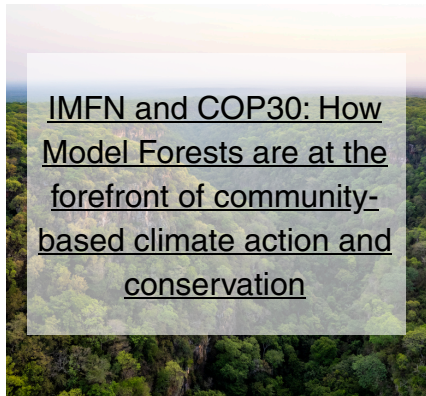
Mongolia and IUCN sign Memorandum of Understanding to enhance cooperation leading up to and beyond UNCCD COP17



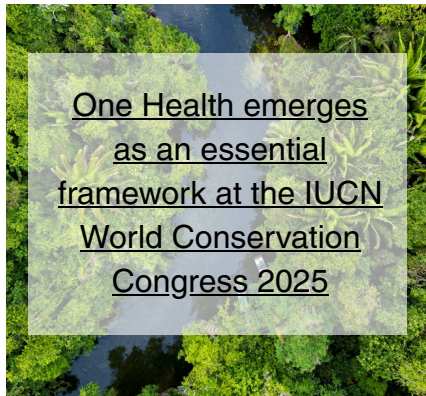
Nature-based Solutions in the World's Drylands: Why IUCN's Leadership Matters on Desertification & Drought Day 2025



Forests and Grasslands at UNFCCC COP30: Spotlighting the value of terrestrial ecosystems for climate change adaptation and mitigation



IMFN and COP30: How Model Forests are at the forefront of community-based climate action and conservation



One Health emerges as an essential framework at the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025

Looking Ahead

FGT aims to bring the successes of this year into 2026. In the new year, we aim strengthen implementation of existing programs; improving **delivery, coordination, and results** of ongoing work, with emphasis on country-level implementation, monitoring and reporting, and translating commitments into **measurable outcomes on the ground**. On the heels of the two the Memorandums of Understanding coordinated by FGT between IUCN and Mongolia as well as IUCN and the UNCCD, our team notably plans to enhance dryland and rangeland efforts.

FGT also plans to embark on **new projects**. This includes the development of ARID, a new dryland program to strengthen technical leadership, country engagement, and partnerships, and the scaling and implementation of forest restoration projects through the FLR Hub.

Thank you to our partners and donors for standing with us in our **mission to protect, conserve, and restore nature and our planet's terrestrial ecosystems**. Your support and collaboration have made a meaningful difference in ensuring the longevity of our planet, the climate, biodiversity, and the communities whose wellbeing and livelihoods depend upon nature.

