

Global response to protected area downgrading, downsizing and degazettement (PADDD)

RECOGNISING the importance of well-managed protected areas (PAs) to reduce biodiversity loss and geoheritage loss, to safeguard intact ecosystems, to conserve geodiversity, geological processes and geological heritage, and to benefit livelihoods, and mitigate and adapt to climate change;

AWARE of the need to understand and preserve the rich geodiversity and geological heritage of the planet and to take it into account in protected areas, as endorsed by Resolutions 4.040 *Conservation of geodiversity and geological heritage* (Barcelona, 2008) and 5.048 *Valuing and conserving geoheritage within the IUCN Programme 2013–2016* (Jeju, 2012);

RECALLING the Promise of Sydney, which “Promised to INVIGORATE our efforts to ensure that protected areas do not regress but rather progress”;

ACKNOWLEDGING the emerging global trend of protected area downgrading, downsizing and degazettement (PADDD) – legal processes through which PA restrictions are tempered, boundaries reduced or protection status eliminated;

NOTING that at least 73 countries have enacted 3,749 PADDD events in terrestrial and marine PAs, including in World Heritage sites, affecting an area of nearly 2 million square kilometres, that most events are related to industrial-scale natural resource extraction and development, and that PADDD events have the potential to accelerate environmental degradation;

AWARE of the existence of tourism and other development projects, which, while eventually leading to a decrease in the extent of natural and/or semi-natural habitats, are not necessarily publicised as PADDD events;

RECALLING that Recommendation 6.102 *Protected areas and other areas important for biodiversity in relation to environmentally damaging industrial activities and infrastructure development* (Hawai‘i, 2016) “CALLS ON governments not to de-gazette, downgrade or alter the boundaries of all categories of protected areas to facilitate environmentally damaging industrial activities and infrastructure development”;

FURTHER RECALLING that Recommendation 6.102 also “URGES companies, public sector bodies, financial institutions (including development banks), relevant certification bodies and relevant industry groups not to conduct, invest in or fund environmentally damaging industrial activities and infrastructure development within, or that negatively impact protected areas or any areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services that are identified by governments as essential to achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and to make public commitments to this effect”;

FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING the need to consider PADDD on a case-by-case basis, as some legal changes may not undermine conservation objectives, such as efforts to restore land rights of Indigenous and local communities, or to improve the overall efficiency of a PA network;

RECALLING that geodiversity is an important natural factor that conditions and underpins biological, cultural and landscape diversity, and is also an important parameter to be considered in the conservation, assessment and management of PAs; and

ALSO RECALLING that geoheritage is a constituent and inseparable element of natural heritage, and that it possesses cultural, aesthetic, landscape, economic and intrinsic values that must be preserved and transmitted to future generations;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, at its session in Marseille, France:

1. REQUESTS the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) to provide technical support to defend the integrity of PAs as a means to reduce PADDD events; and

2. CALLS on all Members, including governments, to:

a. strengthen and expand PAs to safeguard areas of importance for disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, and geodiversity, natural heritage (biological and geological), indigenous peoples and local communities, climate mitigation and adaptation, and other ecosystem services according to the goals defined in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework;

- b. comprehensively integrate PAs into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), sectoral work plans, and post-2020 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) targets at the national level;
- c. acknowledge the risks that unrestrained and poorly-governed PADD (Pressure, Access, Demand, and Drift) poses to biodiversity and geodiversity (natural diversity) conservation objectives;
- d. support the adoption of PADD indicators as performance metrics for PAs under the CBD and encourage CBD Parties to report information on PADD to a central, publicly accessible database (e.g. United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC));
- e. refrain from enacting, conducting, investing in or funding:
 - i. PADD that will lead to industrial activities and infrastructure development; or
 - ii. industrial activities and infrastructure development that will lead to PADD;
- f. consider proposed changes to PA rules and boundaries through transparent, participatory and evidence- and rights-based processes that are equivalent to those governing PA establishment, to ensure compatibility with conservation objectives (e.g. conservation planning or resolving land claims or restoring rights for indigenous communities); and
- g. mobilise adequate and predictable financial and technical resources to enhance PA permanence and monitoring to manage PAs more comprehensively and in compliance with their primary objectives.