8.045 Reducing the impacts of forest biomass energy on climate and biodiversity

ALARMED that woody biomass used in industrial-scale energy production is often sourced from biodiverse, ecologically sensitive, and climate-critical forests, including primary forests and tree species classified as threatened with extinction on The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™;

RECOGNISING that some countries consider forest bioenergy to be “renewable” or “carbon neutral” and are increasingly subsidising and relying on it to meet their climate goals;

ALSO ALARMED that the supply of woody biomass for energy is projected to treble by 2030, with global trade in wood pellets reaching nearly 50 million tons in 2022;

FURTHER ALARMED that industrial-scale logging of natural forests for forest bioenergy worsens climate change, exacerbates biodiversity loss, and negatively affects forest-dependent communities;

CONCERNED by the impacts of such practices on forest ecosystems, which store globally significant carbon stocks and are vital to avert climate catastrophe, alongside deep and rapid reductions in fossil fuel use;

RECOGNISING ALSO the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to lands, territories and resources essential for their culture, survival and livelihoods, and acknowledging their dependence on forest products;

ACKNOWLEDGING that some limited forms of bioenergy, such as dendroenergy from well-designed plantations on degraded lands, may have a role in restoration and sustainable energy transitions if they comply with rigorous environmental and social safeguards;

NOTING the first global stocktake of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which emphasised the importance of conserving and restoring nature to meet Paris Agreement goals, and Target 18 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which calls for reduction of incentives harmful to biodiversity; and

RECALLING IUCN Resolutions 4.082 *Sustainable biomass-based energy* (Barcelona, 2008) and 5.088 *Responsible renewable energy sources* (Jeju, 2012) on sustainable and responsible bioenergy, the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP) Biofuels Task Force’s 2014 assessment, and Resolution 6.045 *Protection of primary forests, including intact forest landscapes* (Hawai‘i, 2016);

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025, at its session in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates:

1. REQUESTS the Director General to:

a. ensure that IUCN Commissions, programmes and policies do not intentionally or unintentionally promote industrial-scale forest bioenergy that is harmful to biodiversity and climate; and

b. urge policymakers and businesses to apply rigorous safeguards to bioenergy projects, with a focus on preventing harm to natural forests and biodiversity;

2. REQUESTS the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) to:

a. assess the impacts of biomass sourcing on protected areas; and

b. update protected area management guidelines to discourage biomass extraction from protected areas, except for subsistence and customary use by Indigenous Peoples and local communities;

3. REQUESTS the Species Survival Commission (SSC) to assess the impacts of biomass harvesting on species and integrate findings into Red List assessments;

4. REQUESTS the Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) to promote biodiversity safeguards for industrial-scale forest biomass projects;

5. REQUESTS the Climate Action Commission (CAC) to evaluate the full climate impacts of industrial forest biomass energy, considering lifecycle emissions and future projections;

6. ENCOURAGES States to recognise that large-scale forest bioenergy, particularly from natural and primary forests, poses significant risks to biodiversity and climate integrity;

7. RECOMMENDS that States refrain from relying on such bioenergy to meet nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement and exercise caution when subsidising biomass energy, especially where it threatens biodiversity or ecosystem integrity; and

8. URGES Parties to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Paris Agreement to align energy and subsidy policies with biodiversity protection, and to avoid incentives that undermine forest ecosystems and climate goals.