

8.137 Avoiding irreversible ecological damage and tipping points in the Congo Basin: Urgent assessment and protective measures

RECALLING IUCN Resolution 7.129 *Avoiding the point of no return in the Amazon protecting 80% by 2025* (Marseille, 2020), which recognised the Amazon's approach to an ecological tipping point with global implications, serving as a critical precedent for the Congo Basin;

RECALLING IUCN Resolution 8.067 *Emergency action to restore 80% of ecological integrity in Amazonia by 2030, preventing cascading tipping points* (Abu Dhabi, 2025), which calls for urgent measures to prevent cascading tipping points with global consequences for biodiversity and climate stability;

NOTING that the Congo Basin, the world's second largest tropical forest basin and home to the largest tropical peatland complex on Earth, is of comparable planetary significance for climate stability, biodiversity and water regulation;

RECOGNISING any recent scientific evidence, research and literature available underscoring the risk of irreversible ecological damage in the Congo Basin, and indicating the need to maintain the high ecological integrity of forests in the Congo basin in line with a 74% intactness minimum threshold in order to prevent irreversible ecological damage, beyond which these ecosystems risk losing their vital hydrological and climate-regulating functions;

NOTING that Congo Basin ecosystems face rising risks of savannisation and peatland destabilisation: tipping points that would trigger irreversible biodiversity loss, release of billions of tonnes of carbon, and profound disruptions to local and global water cycles;

ALARMED that newly announced oil and gas blocks in multiple countries in the Congo Basin in 2025 overlap directly with protected and conserved areas, Key Biodiversity Areas, ecologically sensitive peatlands, intact forests and community forests, compounding existing logging, agriculture and mining pressures, and accelerating the risk of irreversible collapse;

ACKNOWLEDGING that only a small proportion of Congo Basin peatlands and intact forests are legally protected, and that governance gaps heighten their vulnerability to extractive and infrastructure pressures; and

RECOGNISING that Indigenous Peoples and local communities are the primary stewards of Congo Basin forests and peatlands, and that their customary rights, governance systems, stewardship and knowledge are essential to preventing ecological damage and tipping points;

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

1. URGES the Director General, IUCN Members and States of the Congo Basin to advocate, support and take emergency measures to maintain the high ecological integrity of forests in the Congo Basin in line with a 74% intactness threshold necessary to avert irreversible ecological damage;
2. REQUESTS IUCN Members and relevant States to urgently work together towards identifying and adopting effective measures including a geographical exclusion of all extractive industries in intact and high integrity areas of the Congo Basin;
3. REQUESTS the Director General to urgently convene a Congo Basin Tipping Point Assessment Task Force mandated to:
 - a. rapidly assess climatic and ecological thresholds in forest and peatland ecosystems;
 - b. identify and map hotspots of risk; and
 - c. deliver an interim science-based report with recommendations by the end of 2028;

4. URGES IUCN, Member States and partners to prioritise and help advance capacity-building, including training programmes for local conservation organisations and support for Indigenous- and community-led monitoring, conservation and restoration efforts;

5. ENCOURAGES governments, donors, multilateral institutions and private sector actors to mobilise and to increase finance for Congo Basin forest protection through, for example, country packages for forests, nature and climate; and

6. ENTREATS international financial institutions, governments and private sector actors to align all investment flows with the precautionary principle.