



MEDIA RELEASE: RIGHTS OF NATURE

Bringing Nature to the Negotiating Table at the 2016 IUCN Congress and the U.N.

Press Conference: Hawaii Conference Center, Room 320, 3:15-3:45pm

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#RightsofNature

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Honolulu, Hawaii. This week, almost 10,000 government officials, academics, scientists, business leaders, indigenous representatives and civil society organizations are convening at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) [World Conservation Congress](#). As observed by IUCN: “[E]cosystems . . . are collapsing. Species are becoming extinct at unprecedented rates. Our climate is in crisis. And it’s all happening on our watch.” [Earth Law Center](#) and the [Women’s Earth & Climate Action Network](#) (WECAN), members of the [Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature](#), are at the Congress promoting recognition of [nature’s inherent rights](#) to exist and thrive as essential to reverse this trend.

This advocacy is timely. **This week, the United Nations released an “[Expert Report on Earth Jurisprudence](#),”** called for in a [December 2015 U.N. Resolution](#). The report summarized the insights and recommendations of 120 [experts worldwide](#) in law, science, economics, education, ethics and other disciplines towards an Earth-centered worldview and action. Earth Law Center, a member of the IUCN’s [World Commission on Environmental Law](#) (WCEL), was the Global Facilitator for Earth-centered Law for this U.N.-released report. ELC coordinated inputs of dozens of legal experts, who broadly agreed that our governance systems must recognize the “fundamental legal rights of ecosystems and species to exist, thrive and regenerate.”

At the Congress, Earth Law Center is spearheading an effort to [ensure the IUCN incorporates Rights of Nature](#) in its [2017-2020 Programme](#). At the last Congress, IUCN members passed [Resolution 100](#), “Incorporation of the Rights of Nature as the organizational focal point in IUCN’s decision making.” **Resolution 100 called for nature’s rights to be a “fundamental and absolute key element in all IUCN decisions,”** and recommended development of a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Nature. ELC and Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature members are advocating here for swift implementation of this IUCN initiative. As noted by Earth Law Center’s Executive Director Linda Sheehan, “We are nature, and so we need laws that reflect our relationship with Earth – one of interconnection, not domination. Nature must be a party to all our decisions.”

[WECAN is at the Congress](#) as well to support and advance nature’s rights, in part through presentation of the [Women’s Climate Action Agenda](#), a report analyzing the root causes of the climate crisis and sharing the solutions of global frontline women. As noted by Executive Director Osprey Orielle Lake, “WECAN is bringing the voices of grassroots, frontline and Indigenous women community and Earth defenders to the IUNC to share their struggles, experiences and solutions and to demonstrate resistance to false solutions to the climate crisis, while offering clear directives for a just and safe energy transition, consistent with nature’s rights.” Standing with the Sarayaku people of the Ecuadorian Amazon and allies, WECAN is advocating for “No Go policies” in World Heritage Sites, sacred natural sites and primary forests.

Now is the time for the IUCN and the United Nations to lead the way and formally commit to a Programme of work – including a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Nature – that will move people and planet towards a thriving, connected future.

On September 4th, ELC led the IUCN Workshop, “[Earth-Centered Law and Regulation for Safeguarding Nature](#).” The [Workshop](#) explored developments in the Rights of Nature and Earth Jurisprudence movements, examined our responsibilities towards nature, and discussed reparations for ecological damage.

WECAN is leading a workshop on September 5th, “[A Deep Dive on Gender and Environment](#): Exploring the Policy Landscape, Strategies in Action, and Women’s Frontlines Solutions.” This Workshop will provide lessons and innovations for gender-responsive environmental action.

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