



## IUCN Global Youth Summit 2021 Outcome Statement

The first-ever fully virtual IUCN One Nature, One Future Global Youth Summit (GYS) that took place from 5 to 16 April 2021 was a landmark event. Established in recognition of IUCN Resolution 076 on the role of children and youth in conservation, the GYS created an interactive virtual platform for intergenerational engagement to support global youth. Free of financial costs for registration, the GYS welcomed over 15,000 registrants from 170 countries, joining ongoing efforts by youth constituencies and organisations around the world for an open, participatory and inclusive process seeking the thoughts, ideas, demands and commitments from youth.

Over the two-week youth-led event, active participation in capacity-building workshops, intergenerational dialogues, body awareness classes<sup>1</sup>, networking sessions, #YouthSpeak labs, and a film festival, young people across the globe contributed to shape a GYS Outcome. This Outcome aims to strengthen localised solutions to global challenges through the lens of the Sustainable Development Goals, and is in full alignment with and support of the Our Future With Nature – Youth Manifesto, the Youth for Our Ocean Declaration, the Rights for Nature movement, and reflective of the #YouthSpeak Values Statement. It is the hope that this GYS Outcome is accepted and supported by decision-makers, Union Members, and young champions around the world to break down silos and unify momentum for global youth.

As we Look To The Future, the GYS Outcome Statement offers insight, support and resources in the advocacy for meaningful engagement and leadership of global youth in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development programming, practice, and decision-making. The inclusion of youth should be genuine and not purely tokenistic, requiring all generations to effectively join together in support of young leaders, while honouring the wisdom of elders. It is essential to amplify young voices with awareness of the intersection of gender, environmental protection, and traditional and Indigenous identity.

Young people call for a transformation of values and approaches in conservation, recognising the interconnection between people and the planet, supporting recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) to their land<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, there is broad support to pursue Legal Personhood for Nature around the World (see brief). Through individual and international actions, it is possible to address the critical role of peace and security, as highlighted in the Healing the Human-Nature Relationship brief. Achieving peace is an integral step to sustainable development, considering that natural resource governance and nature-based recovery are connected and require nature based approaches, as referenced in the Caring for Ecosystems, Caring for People: Integrating Water to Build Back Better brief.

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<sup>1</sup>In effort to support normalisation of self-care as part of advocacy work, these classes offered space to explore meditation, yoga, and responsible lifestyle choices.

<sup>2</sup>In a workshop organised by Earth Law Center, GARN Youth Hub, and IUCN WCEL, requests were delivered for IUCN to implement commitments to Rights of Nature as identified in Resolution 100 through inspiring and promoting implementation and enforcement of Earth Jurisprudence and the Rights of Nature, such as through advocating for legal personhood for Nature and updating the IUCN statutes to shift away from equating Nature to a natural resource and object here for human benefit and utility; and creating more opportunities for youth to exchange knowledge and ideas globally, and for their voices to be included in decision making, such as through Creating an IUCN Commission (or working group within each Commission) for Youth and creating a strategy for the Rights of Nature to be mainstreamed with IUCN commissions through cross-cutting and joint initiatives, events, discussions or projects.

To amplify young Indigenous Voices, there is a need to adopt a view that local and Indigenous people are not separate from the landscape, and that advocates for the inclusion, consultation, and support of IPLCs in all sustainable development (nature conservation and biodiversity) work, negotiations, and decision-making. Particular attention is required to advance efforts to promote nature education that is inclusive and representative (see brief).

Young people call for explicit consideration of economic opportunities for youth, particularly young Indigenous peoples and young people in the Global South. Young people must be engaged and play a leadership role in the development of Nature-based Solutions to contribute to the future, as well as to benefit from the development of such initiatives. Green jobs (brief) can address the youth employment challenge while helping protect nature and boosting resilience.

To further maximise the potential of global youth advocacy, it is recommended that technology play a role, specifically by increasing access to open-sourced technologies and supporting participation in citizen science. An obstacle for global inclusivity, especially in virtual experiences, is the digital divide. Recognising the GYBN Survey and Perspectives on Digital Inequalities, it is recommended that women, Indigenous peoples and youth constituencies receive special attention regarding Internet access and connectivity in order to support meaningful participation. Further support can be provided by Creating a Digital Hub for Community Engagement in Environmental Action (see brief).

There is a need, appreciation and interest in supporting creative storytelling, including visual media, as a tool to cope and respond to global challenges in sustainable development, particularly in communicating success stories and solutions from all parts of the world to motivate and inspire action. Green Stories: Creative Responses to Climate Emergencies (brief) offers support in the development of concrete, action-oriented stories about creative responses.

Young people are well-informed and experienced stakeholders, representing a diversity of expertise and perspectives. Not all youth are the same, and therefore cannot be represented by one "token" youth representative, requiring reconciliation on engaging diversity. In support of young people during meetings, there is a call for resource mobilisation to increase meaningful engagement by providing on-site education and mentorship and specific allotted opportunities for involvement, particularly for the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework<sup>3</sup>, the COP26 of the UNFCCC negotiations, and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration<sup>4</sup>. The 'Your Promise, Our Future' Action Campaign Report, which documents the results from the Your Promise, Our Future campaign launched on 15 April 2021, provides evidence of commitments from 300 young people from 69 countries.

The world changed in 2020. At a time designated to greet the first maturing targets of the SDGs, people of all ages, race, gender, and social status faced a shared global crisis. Despite economic disparities and the results of the intersection of social and environmental injustices, young people have not only continued to sustain their work, but also strengthened their call to action. This GYS Outcome is a call for action, offering a shared platform to continue to work together for the future of people and nature.

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<sup>3</sup> specifically in periodic reviews of the adoption of the Framework and development of consequences of unmet targets

<sup>4</sup> with a focus on capacity building for youth and early career professionals