



## NEWS RELEASE

### **IUCN Regional Conservation Forum calls for stronger biodiversity action and nature based solutions in Europe**

Helsinki, 14 December 2015. The *IUCN Regional Conservation Forum 2015* started today with a high-level opening session, sending a strong signal for nature conservation in Europe and North and Central Asia. The Forum is organized by the International Union for Conservation of Nature - IUCN, the leading global voice on nature conservation. From 14-16 December in Helsinki, more than 250 participants from 41 countries in Europe, North and Central Asia will come together to forge solutions to the region's pressing environmental challenges.

"We have the tools and methods to manage our ecosystems in sustainable ways, but what we no longer have is time to delay the action. Civil society actors and international environmental organizations like IUCN have a vital role to play in promoting sustainable practices such as nature based solutions, which help to mitigate the effects of climate change and adapt to its adverse impacts," said Tarja Halonen, Former President of Finland and Patron of the *IUCN Regional Conservation Forum*.

As a tangible outcome of the Forum, the '*Helsinki Message*' will be adopted by IUCN Members and experts on the closing day of the conference, expressing the priorities of IUCN in the region on nature conservation, governance and nature-based solutions.

"Europe is at a crossroads, and this timely event will give the regional environment community an opportunity to reflect on the Paris Climate Agreement, and identify concrete steps to implement the global Sustainable Development Goals," said Marina von Weissenberg, IUCN Vice President and Councilor for Western Europe. "We are grateful to Finland for hosting this meeting, and look forward to the adoption of the '*Helsinki Message*' to reiterate the unwavering commitment of the European conservation community."

The *IUCN Regional Conservation Fora* are held every four years as a unique platform for IUCN's Members, expert Commissions, National Committees and the Secretariat to meet, exchange, influence and network at regional level. This year's Forum is organized jointly by IUCN's European Regional Office (EURO), the Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO), the IUCN Finnish National Committee, and hosted by the Finnish Government.

"The Forum offers a key opportunity for IUCN's Members to communicate their thoughts on priorities and activities to be defined in the Union's global and regional programmes for 2017-2020," said Luc Bas, Director of IUCN's European Regional Office. "We look forward to constructive discussions that will further strengthen IUCN's work in Europe."

Preparations for the *IUCN World Conservation Congress 2016* in September 2016 in Hawai'i will also be high on the agenda of the Forum, to ensure that regional matters are adequately taken into account, to influence both regional conservation agendas and guide IUCN's regional work plans in the next four years. During the Forum, motions for Congress will be collected and candidates for various positions including IUCN President and Regional Councilors are given the opportunity to present themselves to the membership.

*#IUCNHelsinki2015*

## **NOTES TO THE EDITOR**

### **What is IUCN?**

IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges.

Our work focuses on valuing and conserving nature, ensuring effective and equitable governance of its use, and deploying nature-based solutions to global challenges in climate, food and development. IUCN supports scientific research, manages field projects all over the world, and brings governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organisation, with almost 1,300 government and NGO Members and more than 15,000 volunteer experts in 185 countries. Our work is supported by almost 1,000 staff in 45 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.

### **IUCN in Europe, North and Central Asia**

Europe, North and Central Asia include two programmatic IUCN regions: Firstly, the European Region (EURO), which includes the EU member states and the West European Statutory Region of IUCN, and secondly, the Eastern Europe and Northern/Central Asian Region (ECARO).

#### ***IUCN European Regional Office (EURO)***

The IUCN European Regional Office (EURO) provides regional and global services to the organisation. Based in Brussels, the Office provides vital linkages for IUCN to key EU institutions and other public and private actors with regional headquarters in Brussels. Over the years, the IUCN European Regional Office has built close relationships with the European Commission, the European Parliament, permanent representations of IUCN's state members in Brussels as well as environmental NGOs and other IUCN members.

With a strong focus on biodiversity, nature conservation, climate change, ecosystem services and Nature-Based Solutions, the IUCN European Regional Office provides valuable input into ongoing policy debates in these areas, as well as a broad platform for discussions thanks to its varied membership.

#### ***IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO)***

The IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO) supports IUCN's constituency and implements the IUCN Programme in the Statutory Region of Eastern Europe, North and Central Asia. It includes all countries in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus, the Russian Federation, and Central Asia, except for EU Member States.

IUCN ECARO focuses its work on good governance, long-term protection of biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources across the region. While acting on safeguarding biodiversity and natural resources, IUCN ECARO actively engages with Members, Commissions and partners on defining priorities and elaborating the next quadrennial regional work plan 2017-2020.