

IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature

A Framework of Principles for Managing Biodiversity Conservation Data and Information

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IUCN, its Members, Commissions and Secretariat play a significant role globally in managing biodiversity data and information in support of the Union's mission. IUCN advocates for access to biodiversity knowledge and data, free access to biodiversity information for non-commercial purposes, respect for cultural and intellectual property rights, mutual exchange of knowledge, accuracy in scientific data, honesty in its interpretation, and adequate resourcing for data development and maintenance. This Framework of principles guides IUCN's actions in fulfilling these values.

Background

Responding to the global biodiversity crisis depends on mobilization of current, accurate and relevant biodiversity data and information. However, in many cases Society's need for this knowledge has to be balanced against the rights and interests of those who generate, compile, synthesize and distribute biodiversity information

IUCN is the world's largest global environmental network. Its mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. Making the highest quality knowledge, information and data freely and publicly available, with full attribution to its sources, is essential to achieving IUCN's mission.

This document (the "Framework") outlines the overarching principles that will govern IUCN's actions with respect to managing or participating in management of biodiversity conservation data and information. This Framework is intended to address, in part, actions included in World Conservation Congress (WCC) Resolution 2.33 *Improving IUCN capacity for strategic information management/information technology*, WCC Resolution 3.085 *Principles of knowledge sharing of the Conservation Commons*, WCC Resolution 4.012 *IUCN policy and strategy for the management of biodiversity data and information* and WCC Resolution 4.102 *Advancing knowledge management in conservation*.

For the purposes of this Framework, biodiversity conservation data and information includes data ⁽¹⁾ which concerns the status, distribution, trends, drivers of change and impacts relating to the components of biodiversity (genes, species and ecosystems) and which is the product either of IUCN's sole action or of partnerships that IUCN has with other organizations. It can encompass, without limitation, hard copy documentation, media, and electronic files and other information in digital form. For purposes of this Framework, the term "biodiversity data" will include the full scope described in this paragraph.

IUCN recognizes that other entities also have relevant biodiversity data and information and this Framework is intended to also guide IUCN interactions with those entities' data and information managers. In many cases, IUCN will enter into separate and more specific agreements regarding biodiversity data and information management with key partners and those agreements should be, as far as possible, consistent with this Framework.

IUCN has knowledge management needs beyond biodiversity data, and an overarching knowledge management policy and strategy is needed and is in development. This Framework will form part of the

overall approach towards IUCN's relationship with knowledge. It is expected that such policy and strategy, when completed, will incorporate/supersede this Framework.

This Framework does not supersede existing IUCN policies and does not override existing Terms of Use relating to IUCN biodiversity data and information products. This Framework should also be used as the basis for the development of new Terms of Use when needed and should guide the development of specific bilateral data agreements between IUCN and data providers and between IUCN and data users.

IUCN's and Biodiversity Data Management

IUCN mobilizes biodiversity knowledge through its Members, its six expert Commissions, its Secretariat and its many institutional partnerships, to support global conservation efforts. It both convenes and facilitates data and information partnerships and actively generates, compiles, synthesizes and distributes (hereafter referred to as processes) biodiversity data, and strives to make these accessible and usable through products, services, and partnerships. IUCN supports efforts to strengthen biodiversity information sharing, through the development and promotion of standards and best practices for information management.

IUCN believes that relevant, accurate, usable, timely biodiversity information is essential for sound decision-making. IUCN demonstrates its commitment to this belief through:

- being a signatory to the Principles of the Conservation Commons, supporting open access, conscious, effective, and equitable sharing of data, information and knowledge for all conservation purposes;
- supporting Principle 10 of the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, which underscores that environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level, and that at the national level each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, along with the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes; and.
- following the principles of the Aarhus Convention ⁽²⁾ regarding access to information and public participation and access to justice
- supporting the Convention on Biological Diversity, whose text, especially Articles 16,17, and 18, explicitly promote information exchange as an important means of achieving the Convention's objectives.
- supporting the UN's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ⁽³⁾ text, especially articles 27 and 31 and to a lesser extent 19 and 32, recognises the proper measures to ensure that information about indigenous peoples is collected and distributed appropriately.

As with many other conservation organizations, IUCN may play many roles in biodiversity data management including, without limitation, data generation, processing and marketing. In addition, there are some unique roles that IUCN plays as a global membership organization encompassing both the public sector and civil society. These roles include those of convening, facilitating, brokering, and standard setting. IUCN is poised to carry out and strengthen its leadership role in supporting management of biodiversity data for the achievement of its mission. It is hoped that through application and promotion of the principles in this Framework, IUCN can both ensure effective and ethical use of biodiversity data in pursuit of biodiversity conservation as well as provide leadership in the conservation community through development and use of best practice standards and application of lessons learned.

IUCN Principles for Use of Biodiversity Data

Access to and use of biodiversity data

- IUCN promotes access to biodiversity data for non-commercial purposes and applies as few restrictions as possible on use of biodiversity data. IUCN believes that biodiversity data and information should be available with minimal, reasonable restrictions on who can access the data and how the data can be used.
- IUCN recognizes the rights of partners and data providers through ensuring, as far as reasonably possible in each case, appropriate attribution and acknowledgement of data sources and maintenance of the integrity of the data provided.
- Use for commercial purposes ⁽⁴⁾, for reposting ⁽⁵⁾, for derivative products ⁽⁶⁾, or for redistribution/sub-licencing ⁽⁷⁾, shall require express written permission and may be subject to conditions set by IUCN.
- IUCN recognizes that generating and processing biodiversity data and supporting the maintenance of systems that underpin ongoing data management and improvement of data quality require considerable resources, and therefore IUCN supports the use of mechanisms, as appropriate, to achieve cost recovery in support of those efforts.
- IUCN recognises and appreciates the contributions made to biodiversity data holdings by developing countries and will prioritise the repatriation of biodiversity data back to them. IUCN will proactively support, as possible within available resources, the preparation and delivery of data to be repatriated or otherwise supplied to developing country users

Respect of Intellectual property rights ⁽⁸⁾ (IPR), including Copyright ⁽⁹⁾, and traditional knowledge systems

- IUCN respects IPR and expects users of biodiversity data to respect such rights. In many cases the IPR in the data obtained through IUCN remains with the creator or provider of the original data. Any request for use of data not covered within IUCN terms of use shall be addressed to the copyright holder.
- IUCN shall not assert any IPR in the data made available to it by data providers unless such IPR have been validly transferred by the rightful owner to IUCN in writing. IUCN will, as far as reasonably possible record the ownership and any other IPR associated with each of the biodiversity data sets it holds or draws upon, and will endeavour to ensure the necessary licenses or permissions are in place for its use. Where ownership and IPR are unclear, IUCN will endeavour, as far as reasonably possible, to make fair and equitable arrangements with key stakeholders to facilitate deployment of the data to the benefit of conservation.
- IUCN will respect and will not share, without permission, traditional knowledge and data associated with the rights of indigenous peoples unless such traditional knowledge and data, is provided with prior informed consent and/or is already publicly available in ways that respect the rights of such knowledge holders.
- IUCN will operate a 'take-down' policy such that in the event of any reasonable claim of a potential breach of IPR, or other reasonable notice of a possible violation of rights or rules, regarding the content of an online service, the contested item will be removed from the service as quickly as possible pending further investigation and decision by IUCN.

Conditions for accepting data from data providers

IUCN strives to ensure that high-quality, updated and accurate biodiversity data are available to inform decision-making. Therefore, IUCN will require data providers to meet the following conditions:

1. **Data quality and currency** - Individuals or institutions that provide IUCN with their biodiversity data on a voluntary basis have a responsibility for ensuring that the data are accurate, up-to-date and complete.
2. **Rights to provide IUCN with the data** – Data providers will ensure that they have secured from the rightful owners all the necessary IPR in the data permitting them to transfer the data to IUCN.
3. **No undue restrictions are placed on use of the data.** IUCN will request that biodiversity data be provided free of restrictions on use, unless otherwise negotiated. In the case of sensitive data ⁽¹⁰⁾, IUCN reserves the right to request regular reviews of the need to continue to treat the data as sensitive and to have sunset clauses inserted in specific data agreements relating to sensitive data.

Governance of biodiversity data management

At an institutional level, IUCN will manage implementation of this framework of principles through the senior management of the IUCN Secretariat. Specifically, the Director General's office will be responsible to ensure that these principles are applied appropriately and consistently.

In turn, the governance systems in place to manage development and delivery of individual biodiversity data products with which IUCN is associated, will seek to achieve the proper and consistent application of these principles for those products.

When IUCN is part of biodiversity data partnerships, IUCN will seek to standardize the principles of management for products relating to those partnerships in line with this Framework. IUCN will participate in and promote efforts to harmonize data standards and share policies across the biodiversity sector.

(1) Data = raw data, aggregated data, metadata, synthesis and analysis [\(back\)](#)

(2) ¹ Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, Aarhus, Denmark, 25 June 1998, <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/> [\(back\)](#)

(3) ¹ <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/drip.html> [\(back\)](#)

(4) **Commercial purposes** = "Commercial purposes" means a) any use by, on behalf of, or to inform or assist the activities of, a commercial entity (an entity that operates 'for profit') or b) use by any individual or non-profit entity for the purposes of revenue generation.
[\(back\)](#)

(5) **Reposting** = publication in full or in part of data in a largely unmodified form [\(back\)](#)

(6) **Derivative products** = data or information that is combined with, analysed or re-packaged with other data/ information to create substantively new products ([back](#))

(7) **Re-distribution / sub-licencing** = enabling a wider distribution, in full or in part, of a copy of the original data ([back](#))

(8) **Intellectual property rights** = property rights for intellectual creations; can include copyright, design rights, trademarks, patents and trade secrets ([back](#))

(9) **Copyright** = a legal concept giving the creator of an original work exclusive right, usually for a limited time. It gives the copyright holder the right to be credited for the work, to determine who may adapt the work to other forms, who may perform the work, who may financially benefit from it, and other related rights. ([back](#))

(10) Sensitive data = 1) data that, if released, could compromise effective biodiversity conservation; 2) time-sensitive data that can be released following a specific event (e.g. Publication of a peer-reviewed paper); or 3) proprietary information that is commercially sensitive. ([back](#))