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IUCN World Conservation Congress: Innovating for biodiversity conservation in protected areas

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At the World Conservation Congress in Hawaii (United States), held from 1st to 10th September, governments and environmental organizations will gather to discuss nature conservation issues. At this event IDDRRI is releasing a study on innovative schemes for helping African countries to better fund and manage their protected areas. They are innovative in that they are mainly forms of private and public actions

in combination, blending funding and contractual requirements. Through the examination of three case studies, we conclude that these schemes seem to have a certain level of efficiency, including at the large scale – which is not something that can be taken for granted.

Integrating biodiversity into the new dynamics of global environmental governance

The [World Conservation Congress](#) is organized by the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#), an international union composed of 1,300 members, governments and civil society organizations. This wide environmental network enables various stakeholders (governments, NGOs, scientists, businesses, local communities, indigenous groups) to jointly develop and implement solutions to stop the loss of natural habitats, restore ecosystems and improve the well-being of populations. In Hawaii, building on the momentum of the [historic climate agreement signed in Paris in December 2015](#), and in particular on the [nature based-solutions contained in the country commitments](#) and the adoption of [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) in September of that year, some 8,000 delegates from over 160 countries representing IUCN members will discuss [over 100 motions](#) (proposals), which will be voted on and will influence the world of conservation and its priorities, rationales and concrete actions. Several decisions have to be made, including the adoption of a common text [on compensation for damage to biodiversity](#), the [promotion of conservation of the high seas](#) (areas beyond national jurisdiction), and mitigation of the effects of the expansion of palm oil cultivation, and of course a call for the enhanced conservation of protected areas, which is at the heart of the IUCN's original objectives.

Discussing new tools for the financing and management of protected areas

Regarding protected areas, IDDRI, in collaboration with the [France-IUCN Partnership](#) and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, is presenting a [study on the innovative financing of protected areas in three African countries](#). IDDRI is contributing to the debate on the financial and institutional means to ensure real and effective biodiversity protection within protected areas, which are often presented as a (final) refuge for ecosystems and species against pollution and the destruction of natural habitats.

We must therefore both encourage economic stakeholders in conservation and find new funds that are predictable, additional and stable in the medium and long terms.

Protected areas, a vital reservoir of biodiversity that must be preserved

Protected areas constitute an essential reservoir of biodiversity that must be preserved, especially due to the invaluable services (known as ecosystem services) that they provide (carbon sequestration, flood control, etc.). However, public funds to maintain and manage these protected areas are drying up, especially in a tense social context in Africa where there is a pressing demand for the development and provision of public services.

Schemes of Payments for Ecosystem Services

We must therefore both encourage economic stakeholders in conservation and find new funds that are predictable, additional and stable in the medium and long terms. At the heart of the strategy for resource mobilization of the

[Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#) adopted in Rio in 1992, are new and [innovative financing mechanisms – Payments for Ecosystem Services](#), biodiversity compensation schemes, tax reforms, environmental trust funds, etc. – which can be mobilized as reinforcements to meet this dual objective.

At scale: potentially efficient innovative financing schemes

Through the analysis of three cases, in South Africa (tax deductions for protected area creation on private farms), in Sierra Leone (forest placed under conservation concession and a carbon unit selling project) and in Ivory Coast (sovereign debt forgiveness and trust fund), the [IDDRI study](#) shows that these tools for conservation can actually generate significant new funding to create and maintain protected areas. In this framework, 3% of Ivorian territory is preserved due to the sustainable financing of the [Taï National Park](#) by the [Foundation for the Parks and Reserves of Cote d'Ivoire](#) (FPRCI), an environmental trust fund, which also funds other protected areas of the Ivorian park network. Similarly, approximately 2% of the Sierra Leone area is protected by the [Gola Rainforest National Park](#), a conservation concession. In all cases, some or all of the recurrent costs that are inherent to the management of protected areas are covered by these new schemes. In addition, the organization of these schemes, which is more contractual and subject to conditionalities, allows a better monitoring of the results achieved, particularly in ecological terms.

Innovating to preserve protected areas in partnership: incentives and regulations

Overall, the cases studied go beyond mere pilot projects and show that a transition to a regional or national level is possible, under certain conditions, based on an innovative combination of public and private funding and action. Indeed, private funding, whether associated with carbon capture or other markets, cannot function without public powers to finance infrastructure investments, to organize institutions, and to ensure compliance with rules, contracts and property rights. Flexible partnerships between NGOs, governments, private funds and bilateral aid agencies may allow the creation of conservation-dedicated legal entities with a mixed public-private governance that ensures conditionality and the effective control of concrete management results for protected areas in the field. Of course, these partnership methods involve, even more so at the large-scale, an increased institutional complexity and significant management costs that it will be critical to limit, although when everything is taken into account it is not certain that such costs will be significantly higher than for solely administrative solutions. Without controlling these management costs (called “transaction costs”), innovative financing schemes for protected areas, especially in Africa, can only be just another temporary solution.