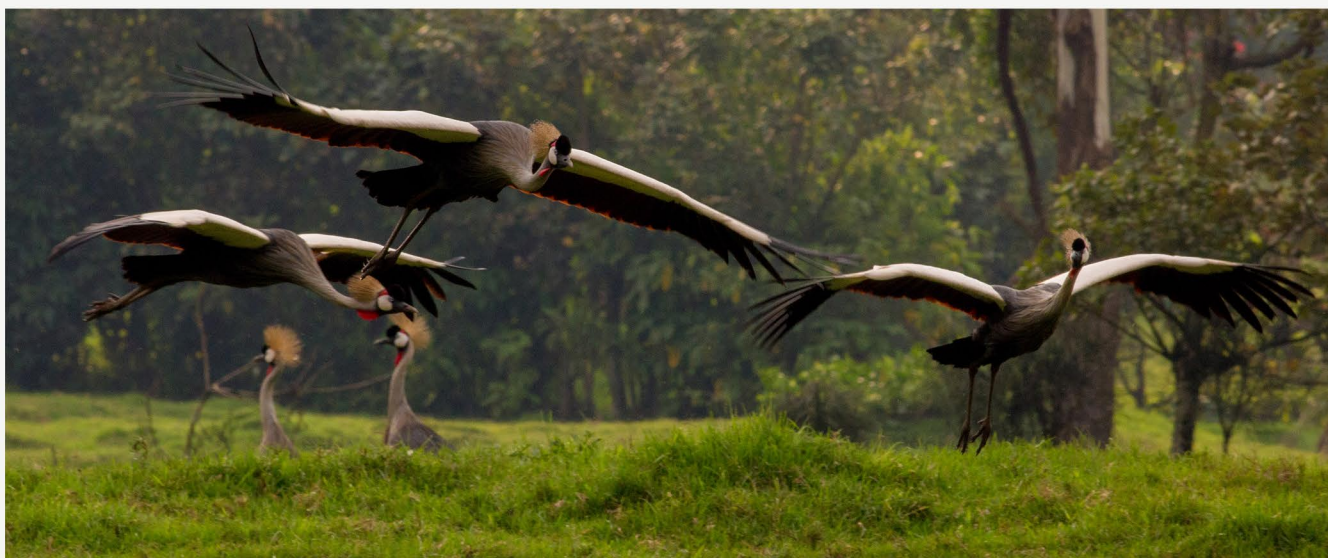


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## 087 - IMPORTANCE FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE OF REMOVING BARRIERS TO RIGHTS BASED VOLUNTARY FAMILY PLANNING



NOTING that the United Nations estimated global human population was at 7.7 billion in 2019 and forecasts that the 2050 population will be between 8.9 billion (low variant projection) and 10.6 billion (high variant projection);

MINDFUL that the 2050 medium variant projection (9.7 billion) is commonly cited, but is only one possibility;

CONCERNED that physical, educational, social, cultural and other barriers to rights based voluntary family planning prevent access to and use of contraception;

NOTING that barriers exist in all countries and are often greatest in rural areas, where conservation takes place;

NOTING that 232 million women in low- and middle-income countries are not using modern contraception despite wanting to delay or avoid pregnancy and that global estimates of unintended pregnancy suggest hundreds of millions of women would have fewer children and/or begin motherhood later if they faced no barriers to contraception;

AWARE that future population size is greatly influenced by reproductive healthcare provision provided now, and that removing barriers to rights based voluntary family planning now would have significant impacts on long-term population size and therefore reduce some pressures on the environment;

AWARE that unintended pregnancy can restrict ability to engage in natural-resource management and conservation action as well as limiting education and income generating potential;

RECALLING the 1994 agreement at the International Conference on Population and Development on links between population, sustainable development and the need for universal access to reproductive health services, based on the right to decide for one's self whether and when to have children;

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NOTING that target 3.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is, "By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies, and programmes."

AWARE that the impacts of human population growth on biodiversity are stated in National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) by 64 of the 69 countries with the greatest barriers to family planning;

## **The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, at its session in Marseille, France, 7-15 January 2021:**

1. REQUESTS that an inter-Commission Task Force be formed by the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP), the Species Survival Commission (SSC), and other interested Commissions, supported by the Margaret Pyke Trust, to assist IUCN to develop guidance on how and why removing barriers to rights based voluntary family planning can strengthen conservation outcomes in addition to promoting the health, well-being and empowerment of women and girls;

2. CALLS ON State Members to consider including the importance of rights based voluntary family planning in their NBSAPs and other national planning documents that draw attention to the impact of human population growth on ecosystems and ecosystem services;

3. URGES Members to consider:

a. internal training and awareness programmes on how improved reproductive health benefits women's and girls' health and empowerment, reduces pressures on ecosystems and ecosystem services, and enhances sustainable development, and how such issues can be included in project planning; and

b. partnerships with health organisations to pilot or plan a population, health and environment (PHE) programme (a conservation model integrating sustainable and alternative conservation livelihood actions with reproductive health improvements, benefiting human and ecosystem health), this being a critical project model in areas where removing barriers to rights based voluntary family planning can improve conservation outcomes; and

4. REQUESTS Members, donors, academics and others to encourage the implementation of PHE programmes and to ensure integrated funding streams and multi-sector collaboration.

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## Explanatory memorandum:

It is common for conservationists to discuss human population, but knowledge about how voluntary family planning affects population growth and size is less common. For instance, research shows that among the 69 countries the UN has identified as priority countries for family planning action, 64 state in their National Biodiversity and Action Plans that human population growth, density or size is a challenge for protecting biodiversity, yet only 13 reference family planning as relevant to that challenge.

Small reductions in fertility (average number of children per mother) lead to massive reductions in the pace of population growth. While UN demographers project the world will have 9.8 billion people in 2050, up from 7.7 billion today, this future scenario is neither settled nor certain. This is merely one projection, the “medium variant” projection. The “low variant” projection is that global population in 2050 will be 8.7 billion. Possibilities are hugely divergent and dependent on healthcare provision provided now. This is elementary knowledge in the health sector, but not well communicated to the conservation sector.

That people should be able to decide for themselves, whether, when, how often and with whom to bring children into the world has been a recognized human right since the 1968 International Conference on Human Rights.

There are misconceptions that barriers to family planning only exist in low-income countries, the health organizations which have supported draft this Motion know there are barriers in every country, even if family planning provision is, generally speaking, most inadequate in low income countries.

Not since Recommendation 18.17 in 1990 has IUCN considered this topic but this 29 year old recommendation (and those that went before: 17.17, 16/3 and 15/3) urgently need updating to suit the SDG era and rights-based narrative. We do not need “population policies” for instance, but rather to remove barriers to family planning, we need to work with the reproductive health sector on programs and policies, as SDG17 the “Partnership for the Goals” sets out.

The 2019 Thriving Together campaign, launched by the Margaret Pyke Trust, led to 155 environmental and reproductive health organizations working in 170 countries declare support for a first-of-its-kind campaign recognizing that improving access to family planning services is critically important for the environment, as well as for women’s and girls’ health, well-being and empowerment. 45 of the endorsing organizations are IUCN Members. There is great appetite for this agenda. The campaign took a step back and stated that people should not be viewed as the challenge facing the environment – the real challenge is barriers to people accessing family planning services. Read more about the campaign and its IUCN Member supporters at [www.ThrivingTogether.Global](http://www.ThrivingTogether.Global). The background paper sets out some ideas for the Task Force.

The Thriving Together medium sized stand at World Conservation Congress (where 6 days of seminars/presentations will focus on this topic) and this Motion are the next steps to build on this global cross-sector alliance. Family planning is not a panacea for all environmental challenges, but there are many areas where population growth resulting from barriers to family planning is a major direct environmental issue. There is no doubt that in such areas better access to a wider availability of modern contraception can ease that risk.



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## Co-sponsors:

- African Conservation Trust [South Africa]
- Blue Ventures Conservation [United Kingdom]
- Bristol Clifton and West of England Zoological Society [United Kingdom]
- British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums [United Kingdom]
- Cheetah Conservation Fund [Namibia]
- Conservation International [United States of America]
- Conservation Through Public Health [Uganda]
- Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust [Jersey]
- Endangered Wildlife Trust [South Africa]
- International Crane Foundation, Inc. [United States of America]
- Margaret Pyke Trust [United Kingdom]
- Marwell Wildlife [United Kingdom]
- Namibia Nature Foundation [Namibia]
- Nature Uganda [Uganda]
- Population, Health and Environment Ethiopia Consortium [Ethiopia]
- Southern African Wildlife College [South Africa]
- The Born Free Foundation [United Kingdom]
- Wildlife Trust of India [India]
- Zoologische Gesellschaft Frankfurt von 1858 - Hilfe für die bedrohte Tierwelt [Germany]