

# Enabling civic spaces | Towards an IUCN agenda

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Recognizing the  
scale and depth of  
civic space  
problems

- **We are good to talk about biodiversity crisis, yet less good at talking about own situation and challenges....**

Conservation  
NGOs: a key IUCN  
pillar @risk?

- **Global survey**
- **Members of IUCN network facing safety issues, surveillance, criminalization and even worse...**
- **New regulatory restrictions for NGOs and changing funding conditions**

A red speech bubble graphic with a white outline, containing the text "Time to Act".

Time to Act

- tip of the iceberg
- IUCN yet to recognize **the scale and the nature of the problem.**
- **not isolated cases, structural trends and risks faced by membership**

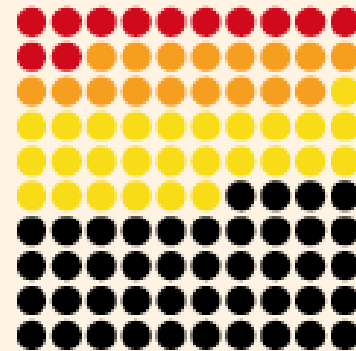
Conservation  
has become  
less safe!

- **Third of NGO respondents said yes.**

An iceberg floating in the ocean. The tip of the iceberg, which is visible above the water, is relatively small and jagged. The much larger part of the iceberg is submerged underwater, representing the hidden or melting part of the issue. The water is a deep blue, and the sky is a lighter blue with some clouds.

- Melting  
CSO  
spaces

**109** countries  
have **closed**,  
**repressed** or  
**obstructed**  
civic space



Civicus 2018

Civic spaces are  
shrinking rapidly

- **half of the respondents: policies governing NGO/IPO action to have become more restrictive.**



No regions spared, yet  
challenges differ



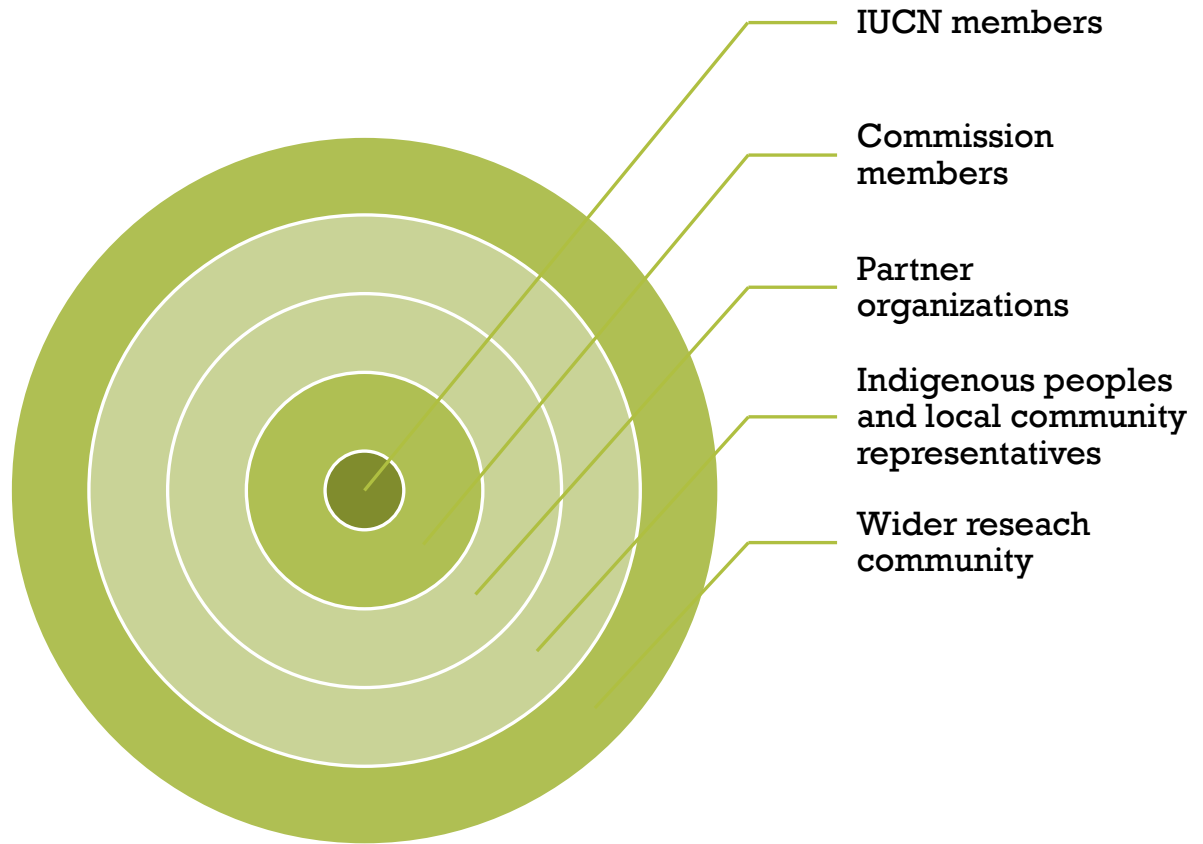
Trend of  
increasing threats  
and violence  
against  
environmental  
NGOs?

- **Half of NGO respondents in Eastern Europe, North and Central Asia report have experienced personal threats, physical violence or intimidation.**

## Trends

- **half of responses : that threats and violence against environmental NGOs are on the increase.**
- **Not limited to usual suspects** (mega-projects, extractive industries, timber mafias) – Species, wildlife trade, PAs
- **Key IUCN principles become sensitive** (e.g. social equity, gender, but also upholding standards as such)

**IUCN  
constituencies  
targeted**



Vicious circle of shrinking spaces: members under attack





Silent crisis?

- Clear signals of **deteriorating conditions** also among **partners**
- a **Silent Crisis**: institutional blindspot
- **Ever more difficult** to raise sensitive issues

Pause for a  
moment

**Beyond personal and organizational safety issues, how can we even expect to make a conservation difference if our people and organizations are at risk?**

**Have we as union been taking partnership spirit for granted?**

An urgent  
matter

**NGO  
members – a  
key pillar –  
are at risk in  
many  
countries**

Break isolation and  
facilitate effective  
access to protection

If one member suffers,  
we all suffer as a Union

- **This is an urgent matter!**



Reinforce environmental  
rights, enabling civic  
spaces and accountability

**From fire-fighting to  
addressing root causes**

**IUCN needs a policy  
agenda to reinforce  
safe and enabling  
environments**

**IUCN as a union  
and space of  
solidarity**

- “IUCN could convene and mediate”
- “It would be great if IUCN can provide any training to IUCN partners to be able to dealing with threats and intimidation to personal or organization. Also to mobilization support from IUCN member in country level or IUCN Regional Office to monitor and give support to the partners.”
- IUCN members

**How do we get there?**

**Motion rejected, yet basis in defender resolution (Marseille)**

**Back to back consultation with councillors prior to Council in May. Council action and guidance needed**

**National and regional champions needed**

Next steps: we  
need your  
involvement

- **Geneva Environment Network launch, March**
- **Sponsor topic for IUCN Council**
- **Co-host of pre-council meeting**
- **Engage with regional/ global network of Committees**
- **Champion meetings/ exchanges in your respective Committees**