



# Chitwan Declaration, 2019

*RECALLING* the Declarations and Resolutions adopted at the preceding eight World Ranger Congresses, and recalling also *inter alia* the Arusha Declaration on Wildlife Crime (2014), the African Ranger Congress Declaration of Intent - A Call to Action (2018) and the Park Ranger Declaration of the Latin America and the Caribbean Protected Areas Congress, Lima, Peru (2019).

*NOTING* that Rangers<sup>1</sup> play an indispensable role in protecting the cultural heritage, natural resources, and ecosystem services of the countries in which they work, thereby significantly contributing towards mitigation of the most harmful impacts of climate change and to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals.

*RECOGNISING* the critical role of Rangers - in all their diverse forms – as significant contributors to numerous international and regional treaty commitments, including *inter alia* the UNESCO<sup>2</sup> *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage*, the *United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity*, the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora*, the *Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals* and the *Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance*.

*CONSIDERING* that Rangers are tasked with protecting a significant portion of the planet's land and seascapes, meaning that their impact on global well-being is disproportionately large when considered against the total number employed in this sector.

*NOTING* that the proportion of protected and conserved areas is expected to increase further in the coming years if internationally agreed targets are realized.

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<sup>1</sup> The person involved in the practical protection and preservation of all aspects of wild areas, historical and cultural sites. Rangers provide recreational opportunities and interpretation of sites while providing links between local communities, protected areas and area administration

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

CONCERNED that the expanding scale and incidence of wildlife and forest<sup>3</sup> crime,<sup>4</sup> and the associated involvement of transnational organized criminal networks, has correlated with a significant increase in the incidence of serious bodily harm to, or death of, Rangers while on the job.<sup>5</sup>

RECOGNISING that protected and conserved areas are a cornerstone of biodiversity conservation, and critical for carbon sequestration; an estimated 15% of the world's terrestrial carbon stock is stored in protected areas.

ACKNOWLEDGING that no protected and conserved area system should be established or managed without the participation and involvement of relevant Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs).

AGREEING that a critical role of a Ranger is to build trust with, and to protect the well-being and legal rights of those who depend on natural and cultural resources within protected and conserved areas;

AGREEING FURTHER that conservation programs and actions should at all times be characterized by respect for both the rights and dignity of IPLCs as well as the rights of Rangers themselves;

NOTING the Ranger sector provides a critical contribution towards realizing the right to a healthy environment, which underpins the fulfilment of many human rights;

NOTING ALSO that currently an estimated 24% of the global protected areas are under sound management, and that this number could be increased by the hiring and deployment of more rangers, which in turn would also likely expand the coverage of IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas.

**We, the 550+ participants from 70 countries, most of whom represent a Ranger association or conservation organization, gathered at Sauraha, Nepal, at the 9<sup>th</sup> World Ranger Congress, 12-16 November 2019, hereby:**

***Strongly encourage those who manage protected and conserved areas that employ Rangers to identify shortcomings, and thereafter introduce measures to improve outcomes, relating to each of the following areas:***

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<sup>3</sup> *Wildlife and forest products* include “all fauna and flora, including animals, birds and fish, as well as timber and non-timber forest products.”

<sup>4</sup> *Wildlife and forest crime* refers to “the taking, trading (supplying, selling or trafficking), importing, exporting, processing, possessing, obtaining and consumption of wild fauna and flora, including timber and other forest products, in contravention of national or international law.”

<sup>5</sup> IRF Roll of Honor shows an increase in the number of Rangers who have lost their lives in the line of duty

**1. Ranger welfare:** given the high level of danger faced by Rangers, there is a pressing need to:

- i. improve access to services that can improve health and safety, both on and off duty. Among the most important elements are access to communication networks and devices, shelter, clean water, training in first aid and fire management, effective medical evacuation plans, and adequate health care, both in terms of access and coverage.
- ii. Provide all Rangers with quality life insurance coverage to support the families of Rangers killed or seriously injured in the line of duty.
- iii. Empower, motivate and enable Rangers to maintain a balance between work and home life through i) provision of adequate leave to reduce physical and mental stress; ii) the hiring of adequate and appropriate numbers of Rangers per site; and iii) clear frameworks and opportunities for career progression and enhancement.

**2. Relationship with communities:** recognizing IPLCs' custodianship of their traditional land areas, their rights to safeguarding their heritage and their contribution to conservation, it is imperative that:

- i. comprehensive training programs on the topic of community relations and observance of rights are developed;
- ii. strong national institutions are supported by national policies and guidance that reflect the critical importance of mutually supportive partnerships between IPLCs and Rangers, and that facilitate the creation of platforms and opportunities to build trust, to increase collaboration, dialogue and transparency between Rangers and IPLCs.
- iii. Such trust building processes should be ongoing and should seek to define mutual benefit and identify mutually acceptable solutions.

**3. Indigenous Rangers:** recognizing the traditional knowledge and essential role of IPLCs, national authorities are strongly encouraged to:

- i. give serious and urgent consideration to the creation of Ranger programs for IPLCs;
- ii. professionalize IPLCs recruited as Rangers on their lands with the training and protections required to undertake their roles correctly and safely, whilst enabling and supporting traditional knowledge and beliefs;
- iii. reward IPLC Rangers with appropriate pay and benefits; and,
- iv. support the hiring of indigenous people and local communities into the Ranger profession, particularly in those countries or regions where such people are poorly represented in this employment sector.

**4. Capacity:** noting the importance of on-going and appropriate training, Rangers should be supported in the same manner as other critical public sectors tasked with safeguarding state resources, protecting the integrity of the state and ensuring the rule of law, and that important capacity prerequisites include:

- i. development of guidance and policy frameworks based on international standards and good practices;
- ii. high quality training (including mentoring programs, exchanges and refresher courses) adapted to local context and requirements, covering *inter alia* international standards related to law enforcement, social safeguards, and use of equipment;
- iii. internal and external accountability frameworks;
- iv. a commitment by relevant national ministries and agencies that all avenues will be explored to ensure that Rangers will be staffed in adequate numbers to deliver their work in a safe and effective manner.

5. **Female Rangers:** recognizing the significant gender gap that currently exists in the Ranger profession, there is an urgent need to:

- i. put in place policies to ensure equal opportunities in hiring and promotion practices and that equal wages are received.
- ii. ensure appropriate on-site measures are taken to ensure female Rangers feel safe and appropriately supported in their place of work (e.g. separate facilities).

6. **Ranger Associations:** recognizing the importance of working towards a shared vision, Rangers are encouraged to establish functional Ranger associations and/or strengthen existing Ranger associations, or their equivalent, in order to:

- i. create avenues for a united voice for Rangers;
- ii. connect the global Ranger community for knowledge sharing and promoting good practice;
- iii. provide effective communication and advisory channels to advocate for policy amendments with relevant decision makers.

7. **Technology:** given that new technologies have the potential to greatly increase the safety and effectiveness of Ranger work, financial and human resources should be dedicated to:

- i. analyzing the potential of various technologies in given countries or site-specific contexts;
- ii. link Rangers to opportunities that may be available through NGOs, IGOs or private companies which might facilitate access to and use of relevant technologies.

***CALLS UPON the International Executive Committee of the IRF, recognizing the importance of making impactful contributions to the above challenges, to:***

- A. Work with conservation NGOs and partners to develop an Action Plan for the implementation of the Chitwan Declaration, with that Action Plan to be released in 2020.
- B. Engage with partners and stakeholders to leverage positive policy change, as well as technical and financial support for implementation of the above actions, with particular attention to ensuring that base requirements for Rangers are met.

- C. Seek every opportunity to:
- i. raise awareness about the inadequate health and safety conditions, remuneration, and other professional and quality of life issues that continue to burden Rangers and their families in many countries;
  - ii. facilitate development of standards, codes and principles to guide Rangers' work including interactions with stakeholders in compliance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>6</sup>.
  - iii. have an IRF presence at all relevant forums to ensure that the Rangers agenda is included in the program and the policy outcomes - for example, at the 2020 IUCN World Conservation Congress, and the meetings of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee;
  - iv. highlight the global benefit of the ranger profession and its critical link to society.
- D. Actively create an enabling policy environment by:
- i. ensuring the role of rangers as environmental defenders and custodians of the planet in relation to biological diversity and climate change is understood and well supported;
  - ii. seeking specific policy outcomes in both traditional and non-traditional policy fora and mechanisms, in order to mainstream the Rangers agenda and foster high level partnerships including with government agencies, UN organizations, international NGOs and the IUCN, and to ensure long-term sustainability of the Ranger policy agenda and actions.
- E. Actively foster high level partnerships to facilitate the work of Rangers in helping fulfill the objectives of governments, IGOs, NGOs and private sector thereby further reinforcing the Ranger profession's critical link with society.
- F. Track and report progress between the 9<sup>th</sup> World Ranger Congress and the 10<sup>th</sup> World Ranger Congress.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>