



**LAUDATO SI'
MOVEMENT**

formerly Global Catholic Climate Movement

Roma, February 08, 2022

Members of the Council of the
International Union for Conservation
of Nature (IUCN)

IUCN World Headquarters
Rue Mauverney 28
1196 Gland - Switzerland

Open letter: Request IUCN to take a stand against the Tilenga, Kingfisher and EACOP oil projects in Uganda and to reject the TotalEnergies partnership offer

Dear members of the IUCN Council,

On September 9, 2021, at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Marseille, the Laudato Si' Movement (LSM) supported by 41 other NGOs from France, Europe, Africa, Australia and the USA, sent a letter to the IUCN Director General. We asked for IUCN's support to help stop the massive Lake Albert oil project in Uganda and Tanzania and to safeguard the promise of a sustainable future in the heart of Africa.

The Lake Albert oil project, which is located in one of the most sensitive and biodiverse regions in the world, the Albertine region, consists of the Tilenga, Kingfisher and East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) oil projects.

The projects' developers are France's TotalEnergies, China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC) and the Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation (TPDC).

Please find the September 9, 2021 letter to IUCN from LSM and our partners attached.

The following day, **the World Conservation Congress adopted the Marseille Manifesto¹, which emphasizes the escalating climate and biodiversity emergencies: "Humanity has reached a tipping point. Our window of opportunity to respond to these interlinked emergencies and share planetary resources equitably is narrowing quickly. Our existing systems do not work. Economic "success" can no longer come at nature's expense. We urgently need systemic reform.**

[...] Fundamental change is again needed if we are to build societies that value, protect, and invest in nature. To invest in nature is to invest in our collective future."

¹ <https://www.iucncongress2020.org/programme/marseille-manifesto>

Speaking to leaders of major corporations, IUCN Director General Dr Bruno Oberle said²: *“To achieve the developmental goals, we need to transform our society, use different products and services, create different types of infrastructure, and invest differently.”* Later, he concluded the Congress as follows³: *“Collectively, IUCN’s Members are sending a powerful message to Glasgow and Kunming: **the time for fundamental change is now,**”.*

Listening to the statements of the IUCN Director General in Marseille and reading the World Congress Manifesto, **we had high hopes that IUCN would take a stand against any oil projects that are against the union’s various resolutions including those that prohibit oil activities in protected areas (Resolution 102 from the 2016 World Conservation Congress).**

Some of these projects include the Tilenga, Kingfisher and EACOP projects in Uganda and Tanzania. Collectively, these projects pose severe threats to environmental conservation, biodiversity protection and climate change mitigation efforts. The projects are located within some of Uganda and Tanzania’s biggest and most biodiverse national parks, game reserves, forests, lakes, and rivers.

The response to our letter, dated November 23, 2021 (see attachment), shocked us deeply. The letter partly read as follows:

“IUCN is aware that the ongoing developments in the Albertine region are a cause for concern with regard to conservation. IUCN further recognises that the impact is not only linked to biodiversity and climate change, but also affects economic development. We have been in dialogue with the Government of Uganda and have had preliminary discussions with the Government of Tanzania, in addition to other stakeholders, to find approaches to collectively address these issues. IUCN has further offered the application of existing recommendations, and guidance from the scientific knowledge, tools, and experiences to address these issues.”

Two months after the declarations at the Marseille Congress, the conclusion of the letter that is shared hereafter seemed antithetical to the Marseille manifesto: *“IUCN recognises that extractives industries can be significant contributors to the global economy, and this makes them an influential force in shaping how global conservation and development goals are attained.”*

The above statement is at odds with the Marseille Manifesto which states that **“Our existing systems do not work. Economic “success” can no longer come at nature’s expense. We urgently need systemic reform.”** How can IUCN still support oil companies by claiming they are **“significant contributors to the global economy”**? How can an investment in a 1,443-kilometer oil pipeline, the EACOP, that poses serious environmental and social risks to protected areas, water sources, and communities throughout Uganda and Tanzania be the systemic reform we need?

When the urgency and magnitude of the climate and biodiversity crises were the common thread running through the work of the Marseille Congress, why is IUCN seeking to partner with oil companies such as TotalEnergies when the companies’ work will make the climate and biodiversity crisis worse? Why would IUCN go against its own recommendations and resolutions, which very clearly support biodiversity and indigenous rights protection, in order to support oil companies?

Why say that “fundamental change is again needed if we are to build societies that value, protect, and invest in nature” if IUCN itself is too unwilling to implement these changes? IUCN's actions are out of step with its words. IUCN is avoiding confrontation with powerful corporations and government leaders and is remaining silent when its own members are intimidated and their human rights are violated. IUCN is negotiating with these very same governments for miniscule nature conservation gains, while vast

² <https://www.iucn.org/fr/node/34968>

³ <https://www.iucn.org/news/secretariat/202109/iucn-congress-closes-call-a-post-pandemic-recovery-based-nature>

biodiverse regions and indigenous peoples' lives remain at risk. Civil society groups that speak out against the environmental, biodiversity and human rights threats posed by the Tilenga, Kingfisher and EACOP oil projects suffer office closures, [arrests](#) and other forms of harassment.

Yes, “To invest in nature is to invest in our collective future” but then why doesn't IUCN take a stand against a US\$10 billion investment in oil extraction and transportation (in 2018, 89% of global CO2 emissions came from the fossil fuel industry) that destroys the climate and threatens tourism and other green economic sectors in Uganda and Tanzania?. This, despite the fact that investing in renewable energy, tourism, small-scale agriculture, fishing and reforestation programs will provide [nearly four million](#) jobs to local communities in Uganda, boost Uganda’s GDP [by 10%](#), and provide a cleaner environment which will benefit the whole world.

What is the value of IUCN, its beautiful words and manifestos, if it doesn’t enforce them?

Twelve years have already passed since IUCN Director General Julia Marton-Lefèvre and IUCN President Ashok Khosla called for a “transition to a clean energy future”.

Following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, they had stated⁴:

“Low cost and easily accessible oil and gas has given many people choices and freedoms that never existed before. However, our overdependence on fossil fuels has been costly in terms of contributing to air and water pollution, rampant land-use change, overharvesting of our seas, increasing greenhouse gas emissions and consequent climate change. Our transition to a clean energy future must start now.

Investment in research and development for clean technology and energy efficiency must be ramped up. Our economies need to shift rapidly to renewable energy sources, and more effectively take into account biodiversity and livelihood impacts. Weaning our economies off their addiction to fossil fuel energy will not be easy, and it will not happen overnight, but business as usual cannot be an option.”

Twelve years later, IUCN is continuing “business as usual”...

Will we have to wait until one of the most sensitive and biodiverse regions in the world, the Albertine Graben in Uganda, is seriously degraded by the Tilenga, Kingfisher and EACOP projects for IUCN to finally decide to bring its actions into line with its fine declarations? It's not if but when the EACOP project, if built, will wreak havoc on an incredibly biodiverse ecosystem and its inhabitants. The ongoing oil spills in Peru, Ecuador and Thailand demonstrate this once again.

Not only has IUCN refused to take a stand against the Tilenga, Kingfisher and EACOP oil projects that pose grave environmental, biodiversity and climate change danger, but the union is even preparing to become a partner with the main perpetrator of one of the most serious threats to East African biodiversity: the TotalEnergies. Indeed, we were astonished to learn from the press⁵ that IUCN has recently sent a partnership proposal with the oil company to its members.

How can an international union in charge of nature conservation consider a partnership with a company denounced for its oil and gas projects on all continents? A company that would tap 132 oil wells in Murchison Falls National Park in Uganda, degrade 500 square kilometers of habitat for African elephants and Eastern Chimpanzees in East Africa and clear 1,950 km² of IUCN Category IV protected areas and key biodiversity areas! A company whose lack of ambition in its climate strategy is regularly denounced both by NGOs and by its own shareholders as was seen in 2020 and 2021.

⁴ [IUCN Statement on the Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill, 7 June 2010](#)

⁵ POLITICO Paris Influence, [Total et la biodiversité, 28 September 2021](#).

As members of the IUCN Council, we must alert you to the risks of discrediting IUCN if it continues to endorse TotalEnergies' and if the union fails to take a stand against oil exploitation including in protected areas. It will be even worse if, twelve years after IUCN's call to "turn our economies away from their dependence on fossil fuels", IUCN becomes complicit in TotalEnergies' greenwashing by accepting its partnership offer.

In the run-up to the 107th meeting of the IUCN Council (8-10 February 2022), we again make our request to IUCN to take a stand against the Tilenga, Kingfisher and EACOP oil projects and safeguard the promise of a sustainable future in the heart of Africa. We call on IUCN to:

1. Adopt and publicly declare as soon as possible an IUCN position publicly opposing the Tilenga, Kingfisher and EACOP oil projects and in support of biodiversity protection in Uganda and Tanzania.
2. Engage with the governments of Uganda and of Tanzania to promote a biodiversity protection policy, to replace the current destructive policy.
3. Create an ad hoc working group to follow through on the above.
4. Invite the [Stop EACOP coalition](#) representatives to brief the ad hoc group on an ongoing basis.
5. Reject any partnership with TotalEnergies or any other fossil fuel company.

As members of the new IUCN Council elected through 2025, we are counting on you to rise to the climate and biodiversity emergencies.

While the declarations of the World Conservation Congress have inspired hope and action for environmental and climate justice in many communities, we are counting on you to make the "fundamental changes needed", starting with IUCN's attitude towards projects that seriously threaten nature conservation.

In prayer and solidarity,

Tomas Insua
Executive Director
Laudato Si' Movement

Endorsement By:

GreenFaith (International)
Avaaz (International)
Global Witness (International)
350.org (International)

Sierra Club (USA)
Friends of the Earth US (USA)
Rainforest Action Network (USA)
Oil Change International (USA)
Empower Venture Partners (USA)
Earth Action, Inc. (USA)
Pueblo Action Alliance (USA)
Climate Action Campaign of the Humboldt Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (USA)

Natural Justice (Africa)
Refuelling Africa (Africa)

Extinction Rebellion (United Kingdom)
Anti-Oppression Circle (United Kingdom)

Gallifrey Foundation (Switzerland)

Centre for Climate Safety (Australia)

Urgewald (Germany)
Rainforest Rescue/Rettet den Regenwald (Germany)

CCFD-Terre Solidaire (France)
Chrétien Unis pour la Terre (France)

Save Virunga (The Netherlands)
Both ENDS (The Netherlands)
BankTrack (The Netherlands)

Kishoka Youth Organization (Kenya)
Jamaa Resource Initiatives (Kenya)
DeCOALonize (Kenya)
Amnesty International (Kenya)

Youth for Green Communities-YGC (Uganda)
Tasha Research Institute Africa (Uganda)
Women for Green Economy Movement Uganda-WoGEM (Uganda)
Fridays for Future Uganda (Uganda)
Community Transformation Foundation Network-COTFONE (Uganda)
Africa Institute for Energy Governance-AFIEGO (Uganda)
Centre for Citizens Conserving Environment& Management-CECIC (Uganda)

The Green Net (South Africa)
The RiseUp Movement (South Africa)
Timberwatch (South Africa)
Siyaphambili primary fishing coop (South Africa)
Labour Community Media Forum (South Africa)
Just Share (South Africa)
Helderberg Ocean Awareness Movement (South Africa)
Extinction Rebellion (South Africa)
Climate Justice Action GP (South Africa)

Tanzagreen Initiative (Tanzania)

Strong roots CONGO (DRC)
Synergie de Jeunes pour le Développement et la Défense de Droits Humains-SJDDH (DRC)
UFAREP (DRC)
Union des groupements agricoles organisés-UGAO (DRC)
Solidarité pour la Réflexion et Appui au Développement Communautaires-SORADEC (DRC)
Société Civile Environnementale et Agro-Rurale du Congo-SOCEARUCO (DRC)
Réseau des organisations pour la conservation et la protection de l'environnement-REOCOPE (DRC)
Réinsertion sociale et appui au développement communautaire-RSADC (DRC)

Programme nourriture d'abord-PNA (DRC)
Programme d'Intégration et de Développement du peuple Pygmée au Kivu-PIDP (DRC)
Programme d'actions pour le développement intégré-PADI (DRC)
MAIDENI (DRC)
Environnement Sain et Durable pour Tous (DRC)
Ligue pour la paix, les droits de l'homme et la justice-LIPADHOJ (DRC)
Institut supérieur de développement rural de Bunia-ISDR Bunia (DRC)
JUSTICIA Asbl (DRC)
Innovation pour le Développement et la Protection de l'Environnement-IDPE (DRC)
Innovation et Formation pour le Développement et la Paix-IFDP (DRC)
Green Révolution Initiatives-GRI (DRC)
Forum des Engagés pour le Développement Durable-FORED (DRC)
Fondation des aigles pour l'encadrement des vulnérables-FAEVU (DRC)
FOCODER (DRC)
Fleuves d'eau vive qui coulent aux autres-FLEVICA (DRC)
Femme en action pour le développement multisectoriel-FADEM (DRC)
Grande action pour le développement-GAD (DRC)
Collectif des paysans de l'Ituri pour le développement intégral-CPIDI (DRC)
FDAPID (DRC)
Coopérative des Apiculteurs et Vendeurs du Miel au Kivu-C.A.V.M.K/COOP-CA (DRC)
Congo Basin Conservation Society-CBCS (DRC)
Agriculture et construction pour le développement-ACOD (DRC)
Centre de Recherche pour l'Environnement et le Droit de l'Homme-CREDDHO (DRC)
Alerte Congolais pour l'Environnement et le Droit de l'Homme-ACEDH (DRC)
Association pour la conservation et la protection des écosystèmes des lacs et l'agriculture durable-
ACOPELAD (DRC)
Association des mamans anti-bwaki-AMAB (DRC)
BEIE (DRC)