

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) – UPSC Notes

The IUCN is an international organization that works in the field of conservation of the world's flora and fauna. This is an important international body, especially in light of the IUCN Red List. In this article, you can read all about the IUCN, its origins and fields of work, for the UPSC Exam environment and ecology sections.

What is IUCN?

The IUCN is a global union composed of both government as well as civil society organisations. With more than 1400 organisations as its members, the IUCN is an international authority on the status of the natural world.

- It works in the domain of sustainable development and also recommends measures to tackle the depletion of resources.
- It works to conserve the various species of flora and fauna.
- Its members include States, non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples' organisations, experts, government agencies, etc.
- Established in 1948, the IUCN has the tools and knowledge repository to help the world conserve nature and ensure sustainable development.
- When it was first set up in Fontainebleau (France), it was the first international environmental union. Its objective was to promote international cooperation and provide scientific knowledge and tools to aid conservation action.
- It established the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species in 1964.
- It also played a huge role in the formation of major international conventions such as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, the World Heritage Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- In 1980, partnering with the UNEP and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the IUCN published the **World Conservation Strategy**, a document which helped define the concept of 'sustainable development' and shaped the global conservation and sustainable development agenda.
- In 1992, in light of the growing environmental concerns, the United Nations granted official observer status to the IUCN.
- Currently, the IUCN is the biggest and most diverse environmental network.

How the IUCN Works?

- The IUCN convenes the **IUCN World Conservation Congress** every four years.
 - The Congress brings together its various members, who vote on recommendations and set the agenda for the global conservation efforts.
- The chief governing body of the IUCN is the IUCN Council, that guides the organisation in between the Congress sessions.
 - The members elect Commission Chairs who serve for a four-year term.
- The IUCN's Secretariat is in Gland, Switzerland.
 - The Secretariat is headed by a Director-General.
 - The IUCN has 8 regional offices and other offices in over 50 countries.

IUCN Red List

The IUCN Red List, compiled by the IUCN, is considered the world's most comprehensive information source about the extinction risk status of plants, animals and fungus species. It gives information about population size, range, habitat, ecology, use and/or trade, threats, and conservation actions that will help inform necessary conservation decisions.

To know more about the [IUCN Red List](#), click on the linked article.

UPSC Questions related to IUCN

How many species are on the IUCN Red List?

There are 116000 species on the Red List.

Is India a member of IUCN?

Yes, India is a member of the IUCN. It became a member in 1969, through the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

What is IUCN classification?

The IUCN classifies species on the basis of their extinction/conservation status as extinct (EX), extinct in the wild (EW), critically endangered (CR), endangered (EN), vulnerable (VU), near threatened (NT), least concern (LC), data deficient (DD) and not evaluated (NE).