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11 July 2019

NOTIFICATION

Safeguarding Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) sites: an urgent action to implement Decision XIV/1 on the assessment of progress towards Aichi Biodiversity Targets and options to accelerate progress

Dear Madam/Sir,

Further to the Memorandum of Understanding established in 2010¹ between the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE), a global initiative that aims to prevent extinctions by identifying and safeguarding key sites which are home to the last population of Endangered or Critically Endangered species, as well as notification [2013-103](#), I write to update you on recent progress in safeguarding AZE sites and invite you to step up efforts to protect these irreplaceable sites as a priority action to help us meet the Aichi Targets, in particular Targets 11 and 12, pursuant to the recently adopted CBD Decision [XIV/1](#), on the assessment of progress towards Aichi Targets and options to accelerate progress

The Alliance for Zero Extinction and BirdLife International can support governments in accelerating progress towards safeguarding AZE sites and other Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) by providing guidance and support. Further information for governments is available at the Alliance for Zero Extinction website at <http://zeroextinction.org/policy/governments-and-multinational-agreements/>. In addition, a webinar on “Conserving the most important sites for biodiversity” is being held on 18 July 2019 at 16:00 UTC and repeated on 19 July 2019 at 10:30 UTC. Please click [here](#) to sign up for 18 July and [here](#) for 19 July. I also wish to draw your attention to a new global GEF-7 proposal on AZE conservation, which is being developed to help meet global, regional and national conservation commitments.

With the assistance of the Global Environment Facility², we are pleased to report a number of recent advancements in AZE conservation, including a **global update of all AZE sites**, launched at CBD COP14, identifying 853 sites for 1,483 trigger species and available via an interactive map at: <http://zeroextinction.org/>. Other recent advancements are also available at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/aze-en.pdf>.

As of 2019, 43% of AZE sites are unprotected³, and, despite significant growth in the number and extent of protected areas, the proportion of protected areas covering AZE sites and other KBAs is declining⁴. The current protected area coverage of AZE sites by country can be accessed [online](#).

¹ <http://zeroextinction.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/AZEMemorandumofCooperationCBDSecretariat2010.pdf>

² <https://www.thegef.org/project/alliance-zero-extinction-aze-conserving-earths-most-irreplaceable-sites-endangered>

³ <https://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/nearly-half-endangered-species-last-refuges-unprotected>

⁴ Butchart *et al.* (2012) Protecting important sites for biodiversity contributes to meeting global conservation targets. *PLoS ONE* 7(3): e32529.

To: CBD National Focal Points

We have just over one year to achieve the Aichi Targets, and much work remains to be done. Preventing imminent species extinctions by expanding protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures to cover AZE sites and other KBAs, as urged in CBD Decision [XIV/1](#), is an urgent action that can be taken to accelerate progress on Targets 11 and 12, in addition to addressing threats and carrying out other species conservation measures. It would also support the aims of the [Global Partnership on Aichi Target 11](#), formed in response to [decision XIII/2](#).

Please accept, Madam/Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Cristiana Paşca Palmer, PhD
Executive Secretary