



# Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedures

Version 1.1

This document will become an Annex to the “Rules of Procedure for IUCN Red List Assessments 2021–2024” to be approved by the IUCN SSC Steering Committee.

## **Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedures (version 1.1)**

### **I. Conflict of Interest Policy**

#### **A. Purpose of the policy**

**1. Origin.** This policy is derived from similar policies used by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and from a number of scientific journals, adapted according to the specific needs of The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Key principles for its establishment were agreed at the 21<sup>st</sup> IUCN Red List Committee meeting in April 2015 (Arlington, USA). The policy was adopted at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Red List Committee meeting in April 2016 (Cambridge, UK).

**2. Objective of The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.** The goal of The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is to provide information and analyses on the status, trends and threats to species in order to inform and catalyse action for biodiversity conservation. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is delivered by utilisation of the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria in assessing species extinction risk. To support decision-making across all sectors of society, The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species must be scientifically independent and ensure credibility, relevance and legitimacy through peer review of its work and transparency in its decision-making processes.

**3. Need to avoid conflict of interest.** The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species pays special attention to issues of independence and bias in order to maintain the integrity of, and societal confidence in, its products and processes. It is essential that The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is not compromised by any conflict of interest for those who contribute to its creation and maintenance.

**4. Overall purpose of the policy.** The overall purpose of this policy is to protect the legitimacy, integrity and credibility of The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as well as confidence in the individuals who are directly involved in its delivery. The policy is based on principles and does not provide an exhaustive list of criteria for the identification of conflicts of interest. IUCN recognizes the commitment and dedication of those who contribute to The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, and the need to maintain a balance between minimizing the reporting burden and ensuring the integrity of The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, while continuing to build and maintain public trust.

**5. Operation of the policy.** The conflict of interest policy will operate to ensure that potential conflicts of interest are identified, communicated to the IUCN Red List Unit, and managed in order to avoid any adverse impact on the independence of The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, thereby protecting the person or persons concerned, The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, and the public interest.

**6. Principles for identification of conflicts of interest.** It is essential to avoid a situation in which a reasonable person could question, discount or dismiss the work of The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species owing to the perception of a conflict of interest. It is recognized that the privacy and professional reputation of individuals

must be respected. Identifying a potential conflict of interest does not automatically mean that a conflict of interest exists. The policy is intended to enable individuals to provide the information necessary for the evaluation of a given situation.

**7. Plaintiff mechanism.** Any duly reasoned request relating to a potential conflict of interest may be sent to the IUCN Red List Unit at [redlist.coi@iucn.org](mailto:redlist.coi@iucn.org) for consideration.

**8. Relationship to existing policies.** This policy is independent of and complementary to existing policies such as the [Procedure for Handling of Petitions](#), [IUCN Commission Code of Conduct](#), [IUCN Code of Conduct and Professional Ethics for the Secretariat](#), and equivalent policies maintained by the Red List Partners and other relevant organisations.

## **B. Scope of the policy**

**9. Scope of the conflict of interest policy.** This policy applies to current roles with The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, and those anticipated in the near future, for all:

(a) Assessors and Facilitators of assessments for The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (where Assessors or Facilitators are organisations rather than individuals, the conflict of interest disclosure form should be signed by a responsible individual on behalf of the organisation in question);

(b) Reviewers of assessments for The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species;

(c) Red List Authority Coordinators;

(d) Staff of the IUCN Red List Unit and IUCN assessment units who coordinate, conduct or review species assessments;

(e) Staff of Red List Partners who coordinate, conduct or review species assessments;

(f) Members of the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Red List Committee and its working groups;

(g) Members of the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Standards and Petitions Sub-Committee; and

(h) All users of the Species Information Service and SIS Connect not covered under 9a-e above who have more than "read-only" access.

## **C. Definition of "conflict of interest" and "bias"**

**10. Definition of conflict of interest.** For the purposes of this policy, any circumstances that could lead a reasonable person to question either an individual's objectivity, or whether an unfair advantage has been created, constitute a potential

conflict of interest. A “conflict of interest” refers to any current interest of an individual that could:

- (a) Impair the individual’s objectivity in carrying out his or her duties and responsibilities for The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species; or,
- (b) Create an unfair advantage for any person or organization through influencing Red List processes such that inaccurate Red List assessments and associated supporting documentation result.

**11. Definition of bias.** A distinction is made between “conflict of interest” and “bias”. “Bias” refers to a point of view or perspective that is strongly held regarding a particular issue or set of issues. Evidentiary and precautionary attitudes regarding the interpretation of data and assessment of extinction risk are examples of bias; these are managed through the independent review process. This policy is not concerned with bias that does not result from a conflict of interest.

**12. Timing of the policy.** Valid from the date of its implementation, this policy applies only to conflicts of interest which are current and does not apply to past conflicts of interest, or to speculative future conflicts of interest.

**13. Types of conflict of interest.**

Some practical examples of conflicts of interest that would lead to professional or financial gains from influencing any aspect of the Red List process include:

- intentionally under-listing a species because of concern that listing in a higher category of threat would result in a legislative response that might in some way jeopardize or limit ability to undertake research on that species;
- intentionally under-listing a species because of concern that listing in a higher category of threat could in some way jeopardize or put at risk the operations or business of the company;
- intentionally over-listing a species because of concern that downlisting might reduce an institution’s ability to raise funds for research on or conservation of the species in question.

Individuals should also disclose potential financial conflicts of interest of any person with whom the individual has a substantial business or relevant shared interest, such as a close family member.

Many *potential* conflicts of interest do not constitute *actual* conflicts of interest. Examples include: employment by, or board membership of, biodiversity conservation non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, zoos, botanical gardens, museums, herbaria, employment by, or board membership of, for-profit organizations, research funding from for-profit organizations, consulting relationships, financial investments, and intellectual property or commercial interests.

## II. Implementation Procedures

**1. Purpose of the implementation procedures.** These implementation procedures are designed to ensure that *potential* conflicts of interest are disclosed to the IUCN Red List Unit, which will identify *actual* conflicts of interest and manage them in order to avoid any adverse impact on The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species while protecting the person or persons concerned and the public interest.

**2. Scope of the implementation procedures.** These implementation procedures apply to the current and anticipated near future roles of the individuals listed in section B on the scope of the conflict of interest policy, and to all conflicts of interest as defined in section C of the conflict of interest policy.

**3. Compliance with the implementation procedures.** Compliance with the conflict of interest policy and implementation procedures is mandatory. An individual will not be permitted to participate through the roles defined in I.B.9 a-h (above) of The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species if he or she has not complied with the policy and procedures.

**4. Submission of conflict of interest disclosure forms.** The conflict of interest disclosure form contained in the Appendix to this document will be submitted to the IUCN Red List Unit by either:

(a) Completion and electronic signature of a form generated the first time that a new user logs in to the Species Information Service (i.e. the first use of a username and password); or,

(b) Completion and electronic signature of a form generated through a unique URL provided by the IUCN Red List Unit.

**5. Submission of revisions to conflict of interest disclosure forms.** It is the responsibility of individuals with ongoing involvement in The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species to update and re-submit conflict of interest declaration forms at any time that a new potential conflict of interest arises.

**6. Review of conflict of interest disclosure forms.** The IUCN Red List Unit will review conflict of interest declarations and may request additional information and advice as appropriate. The IUCN Red List Unit will consult the individual affected if it has concerns about a potential conflict of interest and/or requires clarification of any matter arising out of a conflict of interest disclosure form. The IUCN Red List Unit will ensure that the individual affected is afforded the opportunity to discuss any concerns about a potential conflict of interest, and explore options for resolving the potential conflict. Such options might include, for example, divestment of particular financial or other interests which gave rise to the potential conflict, or by recusal from discussions or decision-making processes in respect of which they have a potential conflict.

**7. Requests for re-review of conflict of interest disclosure forms.** If the IUCN Red List Unit determines that an individual has an actual conflict of interest that cannot be resolved, the relevant individual may request a re-review by the IUCN Red

List Committee. The individual concerned will be bound by the determination of the IUCN Red List Unit pending the outcome of the review. The IUCN Red List Committee will review the determination at its next meeting, or if possible inter-sessionally, and its decision will be binding.

**8. Actual conflicts of interest.** If it is determined that an individual has an actual conflict of interest that cannot be resolved, the individual will typically no longer be able to participate through the roles defined in I.B.9 a-h (above) in work for The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species to which the conflict applies. In exceptional circumstances, a conflict of interest which cannot be resolved may be tolerated where it is deemed to provide a unique contribution to The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and where it is determined that the conflict can be managed such that it will not have an adverse impact. The IUCN Red List Unit should refer such cases to the IUCN Red List Committee for it to determine. In such cases, the IUCN Red List Committee will publicly disclose the conflict and the reasons for determining that the individual may continue to contribute to The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species in spite of the conflict.

**9. Recusals.** Members of the IUCN Red List Unit or IUCN Red List Committee who are involved in considering conflict of interest issues may not consider cases involving themselves and will recuse themselves in the event that the relevant body considers a potential conflict of interest that concerns them.

**10. Storage of information.** All conflict of interest forms submitted to the IUCN Red List Unit will be securely archived, together with any records of the deliberations and/or decisions relating to them, and retained for a minimum period of twenty years after signing.

**11. Confidentiality.** Subject to requirement to notify the existence of a conflict of interest to others under Rule 6 above, the conflict of interest declaration forms will be considered confidential and will not be disclosed or used for any purpose other than the consideration of conflict of interest issues under these implementation procedures without the express consent of the individual providing the information.

**12. Reporting.** The IUCN Red List Committee should maintain a standing agenda item on conflicts of interest.

## Appendix

### Confidential conflict of interest disclosure form

Please submit this form along with your electronic signature and date. Kindly retain a copy for your records.

You have been invited to contribute to The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species because of your professional standing and/or expertise. As outlined in The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species conflict of interest policy, the role of The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species demands that it pay special attention to issues of conflict of interest and bias that results from the conflict of interest in order to maintain its integrity and societal confidence. It is essential that the work of The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is not compromised by any conflict of interest affecting individuals who deliver it. Disclosure of certain matters is necessary, therefore, to ensure that the work of The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is not compromised by conflicts of interest. We are reliant on your professionalism, common sense and honesty in filling out this form.

You do not need to declare comprehensive lists of activities under each heading set out below. You should disclose only interests that relate, or have the appearance of relating, to your duties for or contributions to The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and that could:

(a) Impair your objectivity in carrying out your duties and responsibilities for or contributions to The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (for example, through influencing the Red List categorisation or supporting documentation of any taxon, or from influencing any aspect of the Red List process); or,

(b) Create an unfair advantage for you or any person or organization, and which could result in you or others securing a direct and material gain (for example, through influencing the Red List categorisation or supporting documentation of any taxon, or from influencing any aspect of the Red List process).

For the purposes of this policy, circumstances that could lead a reasonable person to question your objectivity, or whether an unfair advantage has been created, constitute a potential conflict of interest and should be disclosed in this form. Disclosure of a potential conflict of interest on this form does not automatically mean that a conflict situation exists or that you will be unable to perform your designated role in The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. If you are in any doubt about whether a potential conflict of interest should be disclosed, you are encouraged to disclose such information.

Name:

Institution (if signed on behalf of an institutional Assessor or Facilitator):

Email address:

1. Are you involved in any professional activities that might be considered as constituting a conflict of interest (e.g., employment by or board membership of organizations, that might gain from influencing the Red List categorization or documentation of any taxon, or any other aspect of the Red List process)?

Yes (please give details below)  No

Further details:

2. Do you have any commercial and/or financial interests that could be affected by the outcome of the work in which you will be involved for the IUCN Red List that might be considered as constituting a conflict of interest (e.g., employment by, board membership of, or research funding from for-profit organizations, consulting relationships, financial investments, intellectual property or commercial interests, which may lead to potential financial gains resulting from influencing the Red List categorization or documentation of any taxon or any other aspect of the Red List process)?

Yes (please give details below)  No

Further details:

3. Is there any other interest that could affect your objectivity or independence in the work in which you will be involved?

Yes (please give details below)  No

Further details:

4. I hereby declare to the best of my knowledge that the disclosed information is complete and correct. I undertake to inform the IUCN Red List Unit immediately of any change in my circumstances during the course of work assigned to me or relating to my contributions to The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, regarding potential conflict of interest. I understand that information about my



interests will be held by the IUCN Red List Unit for a period of twenty years after the date of signing this disclosure, after which the information will be destroyed. Subject to the requirement to notify existence of a conflict of interest to others under rule 6 of the implementation procedures, I understand that these forms will be considered confidential and will be reviewed in accordance with the conflict of interest implementation procedures.

5. I hereby declare that I will comply with The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species' conflict of interest policy and implementation procedures.

Signature: .....

Date: dd/mm/yyyy