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One Hundred-Day Countdown to WILD9 -- Latest in World's Longest Running Public Environmental Forum

**9th World Wilderness Congress
November 6 – 13, 2009 in Mérida, Mexico**

Boulder, CO ([PRWEB](#)) August 4, 2009 – Organizers say planning is intense during the final 100 days leading up to the *9th World Wilderness Congress*, **WILD9** -- the high-profile global forum of debate, agenda-setting and action on wilderness-related environmental issues. Committees representing a diverse range of interests and perspectives are finalizing objectives and targets aimed at protecting wild nature – wilderness, wetlands, wildlife, and the oceans – and the benefits they provide to ensure a clean and healthy planet and human well-being.

Launched in 1977 by [The WILD Foundation](#), the World Wilderness Congress (WWC) brings together senior-level participants from governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, native peoples, academia and the arts, and is unique in its longevity, conservation achievements, and encouragement of public participation in a week of learning, discussion, cultural programs and eco-tourism opportunities.

WILD9's array of notable speakers and session leaders include world renowned primatologist Dr. Jane Goodall; Conservation International President Russ Mittermeier; Mexico's Environment Minister Juan Elvira; NOAA Chief Science Advisor Steve Murawski; Dr José Saruhkán, head researcher of the Ecology Institute of Universidad Autonoma Nacional de México and national coordinator of CONABIO (National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity of Mexico); Father Theodore Hesburgh, University of Notre Dame president emeritus; Pavan Sukhdev, head of Deutsche Bank's Global Market Business; nature photographers Frans Lanting, Art Wolfe and Michael "Nick" Nichols; Grupo Bimbo's CEO Daniel Servitje; senior leadership from National Geographic; leaders from 15 traditional native communities; and numerous other international politicians, scientists, business leaders and artists.

WILD9's central theme, Wilderness and Climate Change, underscores the critical role of wilderness as carbon sinks absorbing CO2 emissions, and as a key component of global strategy to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Other topics include freshwater, biodiversity, wildfires, trans-boundary conservation and corridors, conservation economics, marine ecosystems, and traditional peoples' connection to nature. These themes will guide plenary sessions, break out sessions, workshops, local excursions, and cultural events and celebrations.

For the first time, the WWC will be held in Latin America, in the culturally rich, colonial city of Merida, capital of Mexico's Yucatan state. "Mexican President Felipe Calderon's commitment to the environment, eagerness to host the Congress, and his country's rich biodiversity and ecologically significant land and marine scapes, drove the decision to hold WILD9 in Mexico," said Vance G. Martin, president of The WILD Foundation. "Merida is an ideal host city, being safe, charming and friendly, and in the heart of the Yucatan where the great Mayan civilization

flourished until its collapse widely attributed to poor management of natural resources,” he added. WILD9 is a collaborative program of The WILD Foundation and [Unidos para la Conservación](#), and relies on the support and participation of many partner organizations.

Convening every three to four years, the WWC has been held 8 times in 5 continents: South Africa (1977, 2001), Australia (1980), Scotland (1983), USA (1987, 2005), Norway (1993), and India (1998).

In addition to setting future wilderness conservation targets, WWC participants announce and report on accomplishments and results of initiatives launched at prior congresses, which have included:

- Developing the concept of a "World Conservation Bank," leading directly to the creation of the World Bank's Global Environmental Facility (GEF), which has provided \$12 billion for biodiversity and sustainability;
- Prompting the first private sector wilderness area in Africa and first wilderness designation in Latin America (northern Mexico);
- Conducting the first global inventory of wilderness and wild rivers;
- Including “wilderness” as a distinct classification of international protected areas under the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) framework; and,
- Establishing the International League of Conservation Photographers (iLCP).

“We have been working on WILD9 for over two years and, now in the final 100 days of planning, are proud and excited by the strength of the program, quality speakers, concrete conservation targets and great fun in store for those joining us in Merida in November,” said Patricio Robles Gil, president of Unidos para la Conservación.

Registration is now open! Partial scholarships are available for media and public delegates, on a needs-determined basis.

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The WILD Foundation (www.wild.org) Founded in 1974, WILD is the only international organization dedicated entirely and explicitly to wilderness protection around the world. WILD works to protect the planet's last wild places and the wildlife and people who depend upon them, because wilderness areas provide essential social, spiritual, biological and economic benefits. We believe that intact wilderness areas are an essential core element of a healthy modern society.

Unidos para la Conservación (www.unidosparalaconservacion.org) Founded in 1992, Unidos is a nonprofit Mexican conservation organization that has actively promoted the concept of wilderness conservation in Mexico. Its working strategy combines the establishment of alliances with government, non-profit and corporate partners with the promotion of a conservation culture through publications and films in a search of conservation solutions through specific action.

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