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**WILD9 Adjourns with Call to Protect Half of the Planet --  
particularly wilderness to mitigate climate change and conserve biodiversity**

**Mexican President Calderon embraces new term “tierras silvestres” (*wilderness*)  
and commits to nature protection**

*9<sup>th</sup> World Wilderness Congress - Nov. 6-13, 2009 - Merida, Mexico*

**Merida, Mexico** –The week-long WILD9 congress concluded today with the launch of a vision that humanity should move immediately to protect a least half of planet -- land and sea -- in an interconnected manner.

“That is what the science says; this is what many aboriginal people say. It is time for us to state clearly the scale of conservation intervention needed to make the 21<sup>st</sup> century one of hope instead of despair,” said Harvey Locke, The Wild Foundation vice president of conservation strategy, in the closing plenary session.

The launch of this vision built on a host of resolutions, strategies, initiatives and united support for international wilderness protection as the essential foundation of a healthy planet by more than 1500 conservation leaders and delegates from 51 countries representing academia, government, the private sector, science, native peoples, the arts, media and social sciences.

During WILD9’s opening ceremony Nov. 6, Mexico President Felipe Calderon announced a ground-breaking trilateral agreement between Mexico, the U.S. and Canada to cooperate on wilderness protection– the first time countries have formally agreed to collaborate on continent-wide conservation measures to protect ecosystems, migratory wildlife, and natural resources that do not start and end with geographical boundaries.

Both President Calderon and Yucatan Governor Ivonne Ortega Pacheco committed to increase the amount of protected wild areas including fragile and critical mangrove habitat on the Yucatan peninsula, emphasizing the new concept in Latin America of “*tierras silvestres.*” President Calderon underscored Mexico’s commitment to wilderness by canceling the first issue of the country’s first series of postage stamps featuring wild areas during WILD9’s opening night events.

WILD9 chairman Exequiel Ezcurra and WILD9 executive committee embodied the mission and character of WILD9 in **The Merida Message** (*Mensaje de Merida*), released Nov.10, which calls for the protection of critical land and sea wilderness areas to mitigate climate change and conserve biodiversity and healthy ecosystems that provide products

and services vital to human well-being. Many of the world's leading conservation organizations and hundreds of individuals have already signed The Merida Message, which will be presented at the Copenhagen UNFCCC climate change talks next month.

Ernesto Enkerlin, commissioner of CONANP, Mexico's national protected areas agency, was recognized with the Kenton Miller conservation award for his outstanding contribution to the growth of protected areas in Mexico, the first Latin American country to create wilderness as a protected area designation

In another first, sixteen Mexican and international corporations signed a Corporate Commitment to Wilderness Memorandum of Understanding to collaboratively grow the capacities of the private sector to implement united actions that ensure the protection of biodiversity and wild places that are central to life itself.

“WILD9 took a significant step forward showing the world that many of the crises we face – from a warming planet to freshwater shortages, declining fisheries and desertification – require natural solutions, and that human well-being throughout the planet requires a healthy wilderness foundation,” said Vance Martin, The WILD Foundation president and WILD9 co-president.

Presenters at WILD9 included iconic conservationist Dr. Jane Goodall; Canadian Environment Minister Jim Prentice; renowned marine biologist Dr. Silvia Earle; Pavan Sukhdev, group leader of the UN TEEB report that illustrates the economic value of protecting nature; Parks Canada CEO Alan Latourelle; Heinz Center Director Dr. Thomas Lovejoy; Nobel laureate Mario Molina; climate change and energy expert Dr. Amory Lovins; Sam Hamilton, Chief of US Fish & Wildlife Service; and prominent scientist Exequiel Ezcurra, who presented a new land and marine conservation vision and strategy for the Gulf of California. Many sessions focused on the rapid decline of our oceans' health and advanced the concept of marine wilderness and protected areas.

The largest gathering of conservation photographers in the world participated in WILD9 including master nature photographers Jim Balog, Art Wolfe, Nick Nichols, Patricio Robles Gil, Tom Mangelsen and Brian Skerry to share their work and strategies to realize conservation outcomes. The International League of Conservation Photographers presented their Yucatan RAVE (Rapid Assessment Visual Expedition), an indelible portrait of the ecological beauty of and threats to the Yucatan peninsula, a result of seven weeks of field work by 30 photographers.

The second Native Lands and Wilderness Council convened at WILD9 to explore perspectives and case studies of traditional land stewardship and native people's connection to wilderness. Speakers included Brazilian chief Tashka Yawanawa and Bearing Sea elder Ilarion Merculieff.

Numerous scientists and nature photographers unveiled books during the congress.

In the tradition and spirit of all WWCs to honor the integral role culture plays in our relationship to and celebration of nature, and to engage the local host community, WILD9 organized initiatives such as children painting life-sized ceramic jaguars to grace the streets of Merida; the Latin America premiere of Frans Lanting's multimedia performance *LIFE: A Journey through Time* with the Yucatan Symphony Orchestra; multiple exhibits by luminary nature photographers; nature film screenings and traditional body painting.

“Delegates and presenters all contributed to a week of remarkable synergy and outcomes,” said WILD9 Executive Director Jaime Rojo. “The conservation community will now take the science, energy, momentum and connection created at WILD9 to all corners of the world to protect wilderness that is fundamental to our planet’s health, to its very survival.”

More than 10,000 unique visitors from 100 countries accessed [www.WILD9.org](http://www.WILD9.org) over the course of the congress, averaging four minutes per visit.

Video recordings of plenary sessions are available at <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/wild9>

Agreements, materials and other information are available at <http://www.wild9.org>.

WILD9 is a partnership between The WILD Foundation and Unidos para la Conservación and relies on the support and participation of many partner organizations.

**The WILD Foundation ([www.wild.org](http://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.undiosparalaconservacion.org](http://www.undiosparalaconservacion.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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