**Sonia Castañeda Rial – Candidate for re-election IUCN Regional Councilor for Western Europe**

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**Personal info: Spanish and European conservationist with Latin American roots**

Born in Spain 26th November 1973. Roots in many countries and cultures (Argentina, Cuba, Colombia and Germany).

**Profile overview: + 25 years working for nature**

Today I work as Deputy Director of Fundación Biodiversidad, a non-profit public foundation, related to the Spanish Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge.

The Foundation is the biggest donor for nature conservation projects in Spain, collaborates with hundreds of organizations per year and also develops conservation and green economy initiatives as an implementing agency. I joined the Foundation in 2004 to create and develop the International Department in charge of managing European funds as well as international cooperation projects in Latin America and Africa. I was in charge of launching different initiatives to involve private sector in nature conservation and boost green economy such as the Green Jobs Programme and the Green Entrepreneurs Network, that today comprises more than 11,000 green Spanish Small and Medium Enterprises. To involve big corporations the Spanish Business and Biodiversity Initiative was born.

During almost nine years I have been Executive Director of the Foundation. Under this period the foundation has attracted new European Funds and has won different European projects. Also, it went through a deep culture and management transformation and the headquarters placed in an old garage was designed as a coworking space to change the organization culture towards a more collaborative one. Also, it has received many international and national awards by organizations such as the European Commission or Red Cross Spain.

My mandate as Executive Director and high rank official ended in 2020, and today as Deputy Director of the Foundation, I contribute to nature conservation through green, blue and circular economy projects and in charge of the international relations.

I started my career as an environmental lawyer in 1997. During 1997-2004 I worked for different consultancy and law firms and contributed to several non-profit organizations. My experience during this period includes the drafting of environmental legislation and giving legal advise on the implementation of legal provisions and environmental liabilities.

I has experience in international cooperation for development and as a delegate in international forums. I enjoy being a lecturer and teacher in several master’s degrees and business schools and speaking at conferences and seminars.

I feel lucky to be a member of several international and national boards and juries; nominator for awards, and I have been a member of governmental consultancy bodies such as the National Parks Network Council, the Spanish Advisory Council for the Environment or the Spanish Committee of UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme.

My work environment is very diverse, embracing organizations such as NGO, universities, foundations, business, big corporations, as well as governments. I enjoy working with a wide variety of professionals such as scientists, policy makers, high rank officials, teachers, CEOs, journalists, entrepreneurs or activists among others.

Since 2021, I am a member of the Council of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Since 2022 I am part of Homeward Bound, a global initiative for women in STEMM that aim at, by 2036, have powered a globally diverse leadership network of 10,000 STEMM women who are ensuring the sustainability of the planet.

**More information**

I work for nature and spend my free time in nature. I show a natural tendency for cooperation and collaboration and build sincere and longtime relations with people and issues that spark my interests and passion.

Since a teenager I have travelled extensively around the world and I am well aware of the global challenges facing the planet. I have always shown great interest in the reality outside national borders and international networking. Also, my background allows me to be able to understand and apply different approaches to common realities and challenges. At the same time I am very much interested in indigenous peoples, local communities and cultural heritage.

I am passionate about mountains, rural landscapes and polar regions.

**PROFESIONAL DETAILS**

**Biodiversity Foundation, Spanish Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge**

20 years 4 months. Madrid

Deputy Director 2020 - Present (4 years 8 months)

Executive Director 2012 - 2020 (8 years 7 months)

Deputy Director 2004-2012 (7 year 3 months)

**Environmental Consultant**. Consultant and lawyer January 2003 - November 2004 (1 year 11 months) Madrid, South Africa, Costa Rica and Japan.
**JIMÉNEZ DE PARGA, ENVIRONMENT**. Consultant/Lawyer January 2002 - December 2002 (1 year) Madrid
**ENVIRONMENT, LAWYERS AND CONSULTANTS PRACTICA**. Director 1997 - December 2001 (4 years) Madrid
**Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP)** Consultant 1996 - 1998 (2 years) Madrid
**Spanish Chamber of Commerce in Australia**. Commercial Officer 1996 - 1997 (1 year) Sydney
**Law Firm Intern** 1994 - 1996 (2 years) Madrid

**EDUCATION**

* **Leadership Programme -** Homeward Bound (2022 -2024) On line- Antarctica.
* **III Global Civil Society Seminar** - Fundacion Rafael del Pino and Harvard Kennedy School (2018) Harvard.
* **Starting Green Business Programme** - ESADE Universidad Ramon Llull (2014) Barcelona.
* **Master Program in Strategic Management and Social Leadership** - IESE Business School (2012 – 2013) Madrid
* **Master's Degree, Legal, Economic and Social Organization of the Environment** - Escuela de Organización Industrial (1997 – 1998) Madrid
* **Law Degree** - Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (1991 – 1996) Madrid