

MESSAGE OF THE VTH IUCN WORLD PARKS CONGRESS TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

The Vth IUCN World Parks Congress met on 8-17 September in Durban, South Africa, bringing together some 3000 delegates, representing a diverse range of countries, interests and experience in protected areas. The Congress identified the following actions as being relevant for the development of a programme of work under the Convention, drawing from its discussions and main outcomes, and especially from the Durban Accord and Action Plan.

Biodiversity and ecosystem services are essential to sustainable development

Biodiversity plays a critical role in overall sustainable development and poverty eradication. It is essential to our planet, human well-being and to the livelihood and cultural integrity of people. Biodiversity is currently being lost at unprecedented rates due to human activities. This trend will only be reversed if the benefits and costs of maintaining biological diversity are distributed equitably.

The Convention on Biological Diversity is an indispensable element to ensure the continued provision of ecosystem services

The WSSD has recognized the Convention as the key instrument of global cooperation for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from use of genetic resources.

A representative and effectively managed protected areas system is crucial to achieve the objectives of the Convention and the 2010 target

A more efficient and coherent implementation of the three objectives of the Convention and the achievement by 2010 of a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biological diversity will require a comprehensive, representative and effectively managed system of protected areas. However, a new paradigm is needed to enable protected areas to better fulfill their role in implementing the Convention, fully recognizing the benefits that protected areas provide beyond boundaries.

The Congress acknowledges progress in the development of protected areas globally, but has also identified serious gaps, challenges and deficiencies

The Congress celebrates the expansion of protected areas to cover 11.5 percent of the Earth's land surface, but notes that there remain serious gaps in coverage of many important species and biomes. Management of many existing protected areas remains ineffective. Protected areas are challenged by underlying and accelerating forces and threats, such as poverty, globalization, security and global change. Protected areas are threatened by habitat loss, fragmentation, unsustainable exploitation, invasive species, lack of capacity, inappropriate policies and incentives, and inequitable distribution of costs and benefits.

The Congress calls on the Conference of the Parties to consider the following actions:

1. Planning, selecting, establishing and managing protected areas systems.

The existing system of protected areas is incomplete and requires strengthening, expansion and consolidation if the Convention's 2010 target – as well as many elements of the

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – is to be met. The global system of protected areas needs to safeguard all globally and nationally important areas for biodiversity, based on sound science. The system needs to comprise an ecologically representative and coherent network of land and sea areas that should include protected areas, corridors and buffer zones, and is characterized by interconnectivity with the landscape and existing socio-economic structures and institutions.

To this end, the Congress calls upon the Conference of the Parties to adopt specific targets and timetables for:

- **Species:** Effectively conserve all globally threatened species *in situ* with an immediate emphasis on all globally critically endangered and endangered species confined to a single site.
- **Habitats:** Effectively conserve viable representations of every terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems within protected areas.
- **Ecological processes and services:** Protect all natural ecological processes that generate and maintain biodiversity and provide humanity with vital ecosystem services.

The Congress further calls on Parties to:

- Maximize representation and persistence of biodiversity in comprehensive protected area networks focusing especially on threatened and under-protected ecosystems and species globally threatened with extinction;
- Take action to address the severe under-representation of freshwater ecosystems, and marine ecosystems in the global protected area system in accordance with the WSSD 2012 target;
- By 2012, devote urgent attention to creating and expanding marine protected area networks, including the marine biodiversity and ecosystem processes in the world oceans that lie beyond national jurisdiction, including Antarctica;
- In accordance with the principles embodied in the Ecosystem Approach, ensure that protected area systems are linked to, supported by, and integrated with efforts to conserve and sustainably use biological diversity across the broader landscape/seascape;
- As called for in the WSSD Plan of Implementation, take actions to promote the development of national and regional ecological networks, corridors and transboundary protected areas;
- Apply the Ecosystem Approach to the planning and management of all protected areas and other important areas for biodiversity by 2010;
- Elaborate and implement national strategic plans for systems of protected areas in the context of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and management plans for individual areas; and
- Address global change adaptation measures in protected area management strategies.

2. Benefits, Equity and Participation

The Congress emphasised the role that protected areas play in sustainable development, ecological services, livelihood opportunities, and poverty eradication. The Congress also noted that protected areas may have a negative impact on indigenous peoples, including mobile indigenous peoples, and local communities, when their rights and interests are not accounted for and addressed and where they do not fully participate in and agree to decisions that affect them. It further noted the importance of securing indigenous peoples'

rights to their lands and territories as an imperative to guarantee sustainable protected areas.

To those ends, the Congress calls on the Conference of the Parties by 2010 to:

- Ensure that indigenous and mobile peoples, local communities, women and youth, fully participate in the establishment and management of protected areas and that mechanisms are put in place to guarantee that they share in the benefits arising from these areas;
- Foster and implement effective communication programmes to ensure that indigenous and mobile peoples and local communities effectively participate in the establishment and management of protected areas;
- Reform protected area policies, systems and funding arrangements to effectively support community conserved areas and co-managed protected areas;
- Ensure that NBSAPs and protected areas policies address poverty issues, and that national poverty reduction strategies include recommendations and actions of NBSAPs; and
- Support and contribute to the implementation of all MDGs, especially those related to social, economic and cultural rights as fundamental performance criteria for all protected area policies, systems and site level processes.

3. Enabling Activities

A well-managed global system of protected areas requires urgent action to create enabling conditions and empower the broad range of sectors, communities and interests who must be involved. A fundamental enabling condition is the establishment of trust and the development of dialogue among all stakeholders. To these ends, the Congress calls on the Conference of the Parties to take action in the following areas:

3.1 Capacity building

Protected areas need to be managed by effective institutions, within a supportive policy and legal framework, and by trained professionals with the necessary technical and management skills. Inadequate capacities in these areas severely limit the contribution that protected areas can make to the aims of the Convention and achievement of its 2010 target. Capacity building in this broad sense needs to be a central priority of the programme of work. To this end the Congress calls upon the Conference of the Parties to:

- Implement a strong, comprehensive and sustainable programme on capacity building by 2006;
- Create an implementation support mechanism for protected area systems that uses existing structures, including the CBD Clearing-House Mechanism, inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and
- Use, as appropriate, the guidelines and tools developed by the World Commission on Protected Areas, such as the Protected Areas Learning Network (PALNet).

3.2 Financial Support

As much as \$25 billion in additional annual support is required to establish and maintain an effective global system of protected areas. Governments, especially from developed countries, IGOs, NGOs and the private sector need to provide additional financial resources. Specific actions that would encourage the provision of more effective financial support include:

- Reconfirm that a more efficient and coherent implementation of the Convention and the achievement by 2010 of a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biological

diversity will require the provision of new and additional financial and technical resources to developing countries, as stated in the Plan of Implementation of WSSD;

- Request the GEF to advise COP 8 on the current global annual protected areas funding levels and identify options for how funding shortfalls, particularly recurrent funding, could be filled;
- Request the GEF to maintain current levels of support for protected areas and commit, in the fourth replenishment, to a substantive increase in funding for protected areas and biodiversity, to help meet any identified funding shortfall;
- Call upon donors to commit to substantive increases in funding for protected areas and conservation, and mobilize additional funding by 2006; and
- Encourage Parties to undertake by 2006 national-level studies of the socio-economic values of protected areas, and establish country-level *Sustainable Financing Plans* that support national systems of protected areas. Particular attention should be paid to develop mechanisms that promote closer collaboration with responsible private sector companies and local communities, especially the generation of substantially higher level of financial resources related to such industries as tourism and financial services.

3.3 Governance and Policy

Sound policies and well-functioning institutions are essential for effective management of protected areas. Key actions to promote appropriate protected area governance and policies include the following:

- Recognise the diversity of protected area governance approaches, such as community conserved areas, indigenous conservation areas and private protected areas, and encourage Parties to support this diversity;
- Promote mechanisms for equitably distributing the costs and benefits of protected areas;
- Empower local and indigenous communities living in and around protected areas to effectively participate in their management;
- Consider governance principles such as the rule of law, participatory decision-making, mechanisms for accountability and equitable dispute resolution institutions and procedures;
- Identify and implement policy reforms to provide a supportive enabling environment for more effective management of protected area systems and sustainable use of biological resources in their surrounding landscapes and seascapes;
- Harmonize sectoral policies and laws to ensure that they support the conservation and effective management of protected areas; and
- Promote synergies between the CBD and other agreements and processes such as the World Heritage Convention, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance and the Convention on Migratory Species and well as relevant regional initiatives.

4. Assessment, Monitoring and Reporting

In order to measure progress toward the 2010 target, effective assessment, monitoring and reporting mechanisms need to be developed. To these ends, the Congress calls on the Conference of the Parties to take action in the following areas:

- Consider the IUCN protected areas category system to be a common language that facilitates assessment of, and reporting on, protected area management, including on the MDG on Environmental Sustainability, and as a basis on which standards and indicators can be developed;

- Require information on management effectiveness to be included in the national reporting process by 2008 and request the Secretariat to distribute this information;
- Adopt assessment systems for management effectiveness in 10 percent of protected areas by 2010; and,
- Encourage Parties to provide complete, precise and timely reports of their protected areas information on an annual basis through the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA) mechanism.

The Congress therefore calls on the Conference of the Parties to:

- Adopt a rigorous programme of work on protected areas including specific targets and timetables that responds to the needs identified at this Congress, as a contribution to meeting the 2010 target;
- Establish effective means of monitoring and assessing the implementation of the programme of work;
- Reaffirm their strong political commitment to the implementation of the programme of work; and
- In the event that assessment indicates that the programme of work is not adequate, to consider adoption of stricter measures, to ensure that protected areas can contribute most effectively to meeting the 2010 target.