

IUCN POSITION PAPER

PROTECTED AREAS AND THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

The key role of protected areas in conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity has been repeatedly emphasized in decisions of the Conference of the Parties. In addition, Parties themselves have consistently identified their efforts to develop and maintain their national protected area systems as a central element of their strategy to implement the Convention. A well-designed and managed protected system complements other measures taken towards conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity outside protected areas.

The importance of protected areas for biodiversity was highlighted at the recent 5th IUCN World Congress on Protected Areas, held in Durban, South Africa in September 2003. The Congress brought together some 3000 delegates representing a diverse range of countries, interests and experience in protected areas, ranging from protected area managers, local communities and indigenous peoples' representatives, and scientists to heads of state and senior government ministers. Delegates exchanged information and experience on a wide variety of topics, and charted a course for the global protected areas community for the coming decade. Delegates also emphasized the crucial role of protected areas in contributing to the goals agreed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, South Africa, August 2002), particularly on marine protected areas, fisheries and water. The Congress also highlighted that protected areas can contribute to the implementation of the Millennium Development goals, particularly on poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability.

The official outcomes of the Congress are embodied in four documents: (i) the Durban Accord; (ii) the Durban Action Plan; (iii) the Message to the Convention on Biological Diversity; and (iv) the Congress Recommendations. These have been made available to SBSTTA as information documents (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/9/INF/21 and Add. 1-3). The Executive Secretary has also prepared an overview of these and other Congress outcomes (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/9/6/Add.2) focusing on how they relate to the proposed CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas. In its Message to the CBD the Congress recognized it as the key international instrument to ensure the continued provision of ecosystems services by ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.

The work of both the AHTEG and the World Parks Congress make clear the need for urgent action by the Parties and a wide range of other protected area stakeholders. While the number of protected areas has tripled over the past 20 years, covering 11.5% of the global land surface, there remain serious gaps in coverage of many important species and ecosystems, and the management of many existing protected areas remains ineffective, suffering from the lack of financial resources and limited management capacity. Marine biodiversity is of particular concern as marine protected areas only cover 0.5% of the world's oceans. Greater emphasis is also needed on ensuring that the costs and benefits of protected area establishment and management are shared equitably, within and among nations. In the 21st Century the threats and pressures over protected areas will increase due to the impacts associated to global change factors including climate change, fragmentation of natural habitats, impact of invasive alien species, and population growth. It is imperative that action is urgently taken to enhance the management of protected areas if they are to achieve their conservation and sustainable development objectives. The Convention on Biological Diversity bears considerable responsibility in promoting these actions at national, regional and global levels.

The 9th Meeting of SBSTTA and the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties provide an unprecedented opportunity for the Parties to consider the work of the AHTEG and the IUCN World Parks Congress, particularly its Message to the CBD, in taking decisions that will guide the implementation of the elements of the Convention that directly or indirectly relate to protected areas. IUCN strongly believe that the Convention is the right instrument to mobilize action on protected areas as it is the only convention that addresses them in a comprehensive manner. Thus, the Convention needs to take up the challenge of leading the world towards new approaches to protected areas planning and management.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Noting the above IUCN therefore calls upon SBSTTA-9 to recommend that CBD-COP7:

1. Welcome the outcomes and recommendations from the Vth IUCN World Parks Congress and in particular its Message to the Convention on Biological Diversity.
2. Include in the Proposed Programme of Work on Protected Areas the recommendations proposed by the meeting of the Liaison Group (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/9/6/Add.2), particularly those included in the Annex of this document on *Benefit Sharing, equity and participation*.
3. Adopt the Proposed Programme of Work on Protected Areas (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/9/6) for the Convention.
4. Consider the inclusion in the Proposed Programme of Work of the following activities:
 - 4.1 Under **Programme Element 1, Goal 1.1 – Contributing to globally agreed goals:**
 - By 2020 maximize representation and persistence of biodiversity in comprehensive protected areas networks in all the ecoregions, giving priority to: (a) by 2010 to achieve effective *in-situ* conservation of all Critically Endangered species globally confined to single sites; (b) by 2015 to achieve effective in-situ conservation of all other Critically Endangered and Endangered species, and; (c) by 2015 sites that support internationally important populations of congregatory and/or restricted-range species are adequately conserved.
 - By 2012 to address the severe under-representation of fresh-water ecosystems and marine ecosystems in the global protected areas network in accordance to WSSD targets.
 - 4.2 Under **Programme Element 1, Goal 1.2 – Planning and establishment of national systems of protected areas:**
 - By 2010 to apply systematic conservation planning tools that use information on species, habitats, and ecological processes to identify gaps for the selection of new protected areas at the national level.
 - By 2010 to apply the Ecosystem Approach to the planning and management of all protected areas and other important areas for biodiversity at the national level.
 - By 2012 to elaborate and implement National Strategic Plans for systems of protected areas in the context of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) as well as National Poverty Reduction Strategies. Such National Strategic Plans for Systems of Protected Areas should consider using, for purposes of planning, national data collection and reporting to the Convention, the international framework of Protected Areas Management Categories developed by IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA).

4.3 Under **Programme Element 1, Goal 1.7 – Prevent and mitigate the negative impacts of key threats:**

- By 2012 to develop at the national level new conservation strategies that are specifically designed to be resilient to global climate change including the creation of corridors to protect biodiversity from the effects of climate change.
- By 2015 to develop at the national level ecological restoration strategies, using a variety of approaches, to restore degraded areas within the boundaries of protected areas as to reduce the threats on the ecological processes sustained by protected areas.

4.4 Under **Programme Element 3, Goal 3.3 – Assessing and Monitoring protected areas status and trends:**

- Recognize the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories System as the international framework for categorizing protected areas as a basis for national data collection and reporting to the CBD Secretariat on protected areas.
- Encourage the Parties to recognize the importance of the decisions that they take on category assignment, made at the request of UNEP-WCMC as part of the process for updating the United Nations List of Protected Areas, and to undertake this exercise in a timely manner through open, inclusive and transparent procedures.

5. Consider the expertise of IUCN and its Commissions and Networks, in particular its World Commission on Protected Areas, in providing technical advice, support and capacity building for the implementation of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas, as required and agreed by the Parties of the Convention.