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Declaration recommends conservation while protecting rights of mobile people

AMMAN (JT) — A five-day conference at the Wadi Dana Nature Reserve gathering international sociologists, anthropologists and conservationists concluded yesterday with a declaration to conserve natural areas as well as protect the rights of mobile people who inhabit them.

As the world faces unprecedented threats to the conservation and sustainable use of its biodiversity, mobile people are discriminated against, a conference statement said.

The rights of mobile people, including rights of access to natural resources, are often denied and conventional conservation practices insufficient-

ly address their concerns. These factors together with the pace of global change undermine their lifestyles, reduce their ability to live in balance with nature, and threaten their very existence as distinct peoples, the statement said.

Nonetheless, through their traditional resource use and culture-based respect for nature, many mobile peoples are still making a significant contribution to the maintenance of the earth's ecosystems, species and genetic diversity — even though this often goes unrecognised. Thus the interests of mobile peoples and conservation converge, especially as they face a number of com-

mon challenges. There is an urgent need to create a mutually reinforcing partnership between mobile peoples and those involved with conservation, read the statement.

The "Dana Declaration" issued after the conference's conclusion recommends conservation approaches with consideration for potential impacts on mobile peoples and their natural resources. There is also a need to respect and incorporate their traditional knowledge and management practices.

The conference was hosted by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, with HRH Princess Basma acting as patron.