



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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STATEMENT BY

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

TO

The Fifth World Parks Congress

Durban, South Africa, 8 – 19 September 2003

The Convention on Biological Diversity: Protected areas and benefits to People

It is a pleasure for me to have this opportunity to address you here today.

IUCN has always been an active player in the process of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It has provided valuable input, starting at the initial drafting stage of the Convention text and continuing today through its work on a wide range of issues addressed by the Convention and its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. I am sure that this World Parks Congress will continue that tradition and that its results will feed into the in-depth discussions on protected areas by the Convention's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice in November and the Conference of the Parties next February.

It is also a particular pleasure to be back here in South Africa, where one year ago, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, meeting at the highest political level, affirmed the critical role that biodiversity has to play in achieving sustainable development and making progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It recognized the Convention on Biological Diversity as the pre-eminent instrument for its conservation and sustainable use and for the equitable sharing of benefits from the use of genetic resources. The World Summit also set challenging targets for the world community: one of them is to achieve, by 2010, a significant reduction in the current rate of biodiversity loss. Given the importance of protected areas for preventing biodiversity loss, this Congress has a significant role to play in this regard, given that protected areas can be one of the keys to achieving that 2010 target and contributing to the wider goals of sustainable development. It should be emphasized that for the achievement of the MDGs to be lasting and sustainable, biodiversity must be taken into account.

Ultimately, the conservation of biological diversity is dependent upon properly maintaining sufficient natural habitat. Protected areas are therefore essential components in national and global biodiversity conservation strategies. Effectively managed, protected areas can play an important role in an approach to conservation that ensures that biological resources are positively employed to help the poor secure a sustainable and desirable livelihood.

The benefits of protected areas are many and varied:

- They have proven themselves to be an effective means of stopping land clearing and, to a lesser extent, mitigating logging, hunting, uncontrolled fires and grazing;
- They can contribute to flood and drought moderation;
- They can contribute to poverty alleviation by providing gainful employment opportunities and livelihoods to people living in and around them;

- They provide environmental services, including water filtration, soil stabilization and climate regulation. In this respect, it is worth noting that around a third of the world's largest cities rely on protected areas for their water supply;
- They protect ecosystem structure and functioning and allow recovery from past damage;
- They protect the genetic variability of exploited species and generally serve to conserve biodiversity and natural resources, including genetic resources of value for crop-breeding and medicine;
- They can improve fishery and forestry yields, by, for example, protecting spawning stocks, enhancing recruitment, reducing over-harvesting of vulnerable and endangered species, reducing conflicts between users, and protecting essential habitats;
- They provide other direct and indirect social and economic benefits, including benefits to tourism, traditional uses of biodiversity, and preserving natural areas of unique value;
- They help to preserve important religious and spiritual sites, many of which are in, or would benefit from being in, protected areas;
- They can be used to increase our understanding of biodiversity components and systems, by providing a baseline for identifying human-induced changes, allowing measurement of natural mortality, and providing areas for research where experiments are not affected by human activities; and
- They provide opportunities for people to enjoy natural or relatively natural environments, and for public education to develop an understanding of the effects of humans on the ecosystems.

The economic value of protected areas is, however, difficult to establish precisely. Indeed, the difficulty of putting a monetary figure on their worth is probably the major reason why the short-term economic gains from exploiting the resources of a wilderness area often appear more enticing than the long-term benefits of conservation.

Nevertheless, some efforts have been made to assess the total value of ecosystem products and services to humanity and to selected economic sectors at the national level. One 1997 study estimated the annual value of ecosystems services from the entire biosphere at \$33 trillion, noting that most of this value is outside the market. It has also been estimated that coral reefs provide some \$30 billion a year in net benefits to global economies as a result of tourism, fisheries and coastal protection. While these figures may be somewhat imprecise, extensive data supports the conclusion that the economic benefits of maintaining natural habitats greatly exceed the benefits of habitat conversion, and that the overall benefit/cost ratio of an effective global program for the conservation of remaining wild nature is at least 100:1.

It is, however, essential that the benefits of protected areas should be shared in an equitable and sustainable manner. Large communities of local stakeholders who in many instances consider themselves historically responsible for having maintained the existence of many of the current remaining habitats are concerned that once protected areas are established, they will not have access to them. Indeed, in the past, little thought was given to the people who live in or near proposed protected areas; local and indigenous people were excluded, and sometimes forcefully expelled, often with disastrous consequences for their culture and quality of life. Happily, however, the ideas that protected areas are fundamentally important to people are increasingly gaining hold.

As a general rule, protected areas cannot succeed unless they address the needs and aspirations of local peoples and ensure that those people not only share—but share tangibly—in the benefits that accrue. Local communities and indigenous people must be effectively involved from the earliest planning stages to establishment to managing and monitoring. Here again, there are grounds for optimism, as a number of protected areas are now being set up and run by local communities and indigenous people with local knowledge and traditional management practices included in management strategies.

At the same time, there are many concerns that handing over environmental assets to poor people will lead to further environmental degradation. In practice, however, when those who depend on natural resources for their livelihoods are given real decision-making authority over those resources—even badly degraded ones—they can help turn them into productive and biologically rich assets.

One way of engaging local stakeholders in conservation is to share benefits such as gate fees, tourism-related revenues, jobs and access to natural resources on a preferential basis. Cultural and spiritual benefits and values as well as the contributions of protected areas to livelihood security and the social recognition of rights to the land and access and use of resources are often significant for local stakeholders, in particular indigenous and local communities. Ideally, benefit-sharing arrangements should be established through a negotiated agreement among stakeholders and protected area authorities.

The Convention on Biological Diversity provides a sound framework for realizing the benefits of protected areas to people. The Convention recognizes protected areas as a tool for *in situ* conservation. But it does not consider them in isolation from other provisions. On the contrary, protected areas form a vital element of the various thematic programmes of work viz., marine and coastal biological diversity, inland water ecosystems biological diversity, dry and sub-humid lands biological diversity, forest biological diversity and mountain biological diversity. In addition, the Parties to the Convention have developed guidance on various relevant issues, including traditional knowledge, invasive

alien species, incentive measures, tourism, impact assessments, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

Protected areas will be the subject of in-depth consideration by the ninth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-9) and the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP-7). An *Ad hoc* Technical Expert Group established by the Conference of the Parties has elaborated elements for a programme of work on protected areas, which is being circulated here for your information.

The overall purpose of this programme of work would be to contribute to significantly reducing of biological diversity loss—and to poverty alleviation and sustainable development—at the international, national and sub-national levels and for meeting globally agreed goals; chiefly the MDGs. It is hoped that the ultimate result will be the establishment and maintenance of an effectively managed and ecological representative global system of protected area networks, where human activities are managed to maintain the structure and functioning of the full range of ecosystems, in order to provide benefits to both present and future generations and to people living both near and beyond the protected areas.

It is of particular importance that we promote protected-areas management in line with the ecosystem approach, which is the primary framework for action under the Convention. The wider application of the approach can help to relate protected areas to broader goals of sustainable development. It provides a framework within which the relationship of protected areas to the wider landscape and seascape can be understood, and the goods and services flowing from protected areas—for example, clean water supply, mitigation of climate change, and wild fauna and flora, whether used for food, tourism or long term conservation—can be valued.

A small liaison group will work in the margins of the Congress and on 18 September to further examine the draft programme of work prepared by the Expert Group in the light of the outcomes of the Congress and I invite you to contribute to this undertaking. I shall submit the findings of the liaison group to the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice when it meets in November.

Nevertheless, there are a number of challenges that I feel must be addressed:

- First, how should protected areas be financed? Especially when those benefiting from the goods and services are not the same as those bearing the costs? In this context, how can both the costs and the benefits of protected areas be more equitably shared?

- Second, how do we turn the so-called “paper parks” into effective protected areas, especially in the light of reports from Parties that only 20% of protected areas have the necessary resources at the present time?
- Thirdly, how do we most effectively establish and manage protected areas that cross national borders?
- Fourthly, how do we better manage protected areas in the face of various pressures such as war or climate change? How can protected areas adapt to this challenge in order to conserve biodiversity in a changing world?
- And, finally, how do we ensure that efforts under various regional and international agreements add up to more than sum of parts? In building a global network of protected areas, all efforts by various conventions and initiatives need to support each other and work in a harmonized way. The Convention on Biological Diversity can certainly play a role in this respect.

Before I conclude, I would like to highlight the close collaboration between the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and the Convention throughout the planning of this Congress and the discussions of protected areas at the forthcoming meetings of SBSTTA and the Conference of the Parties. I would like to pay tribute to the Chair, secretariat and members of the Commission for the openness they have shown to the CBD Secretariat in preparing for the Congress. I believe this will help ensure that the outcomes of the Congress are useful to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

I look forward to stimulating discussion over the next 10 days, and wish you a very successful meeting.