

IUCN World Parks Congress 2014 Bulletin

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IUCN WORLD PARKS CONGRESS 2014 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2014

The sixth International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Congress on Protected Areas, or World Parks Congress (WPC), convenes in Sydney, Australia, from 12-19 November 2014. Over 5,000 participants are expected to attend the meeting, representing governments and public agencies, international organizations, the private sector, academic and research institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community and indigenous organizations. IUCN organizes the Congress once each decade to take stock of the state of protected areas (PAs), appraise progress and setbacks, and define the agenda for PAs for the next decade. The theme of WPC 2014 is "Parks, people, planet: inspiring solutions."

During the eight days of plenary and workshop sessions, side events and field trips, participants will address ways to: reach conservation goals; respond to climate change; improve health and well-being; support human life; reconcile development challenges; enhance diversity and quality of governance; respect indigenous and traditional knowledge and culture; and inspire a new generation to support conservation. In addition to these, high-level government officials, internationally-recognized experts, private sector leaders, activists and indigenous leaders will focus on strategic issues related to PAs, conservation and sustainable development in a series of seven moderated public debates termed the World Leaders' Dialogues. The main outcome document of the WPC will be the "Promise of Sydney," the objective of which is to demonstrate that PAs constitute valuable investments in the planet's biodiversity resources, and to accelerate implementation of innovative approaches to ensure that this investment is successful.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WORLD PARKS CONGRESS

FIRST WORLD CONFERENCE ON NATIONAL PARKS: The first World Conference on National Parks (Seattle, US, 30 June to 7 July 1962) aimed to establish a more effective international understanding of national parks and



IUCN President Zhang Xincheng

encourage further development of the national park movement worldwide. Issues discussed included the effects of humans on wildlife, species extinction, the economic benefits of tourism, and tackling challenges related to park management.

SECOND WORLD CONFERENCE ON NATIONAL PARKS: The second World Conference on National Parks (Yellowstone, US, 18-27 September 1972) addressed, *inter alia*: the effects of tourism on PAs; park planning and management; and social, scientific and environmental problems within national parks in wet tropical, arid and mountain regions.

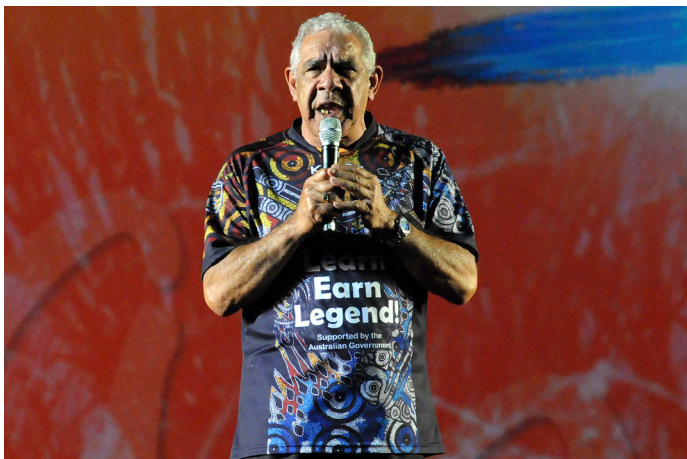
THIRD WORLD CONGRESS ON NATIONAL PARKS: The third World Congress on National Parks (Bali, Indonesia, 11-22 October 1982) focused on the role of PAs in sustaining society, and recognized 10 major areas of concern, including the inadequacy of the existing global network of terrestrial PAs and the need for: more marine, coastal and freshwater PAs; improved ecological and managerial quality of existing PAs; a system of consistent PA categories to balance conservation and development needs; and links with sustainable development.

FOURTH WORLD CONGRESS ON NATIONAL PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS: The fourth World Congress on "National parks and protected areas: parks for life" (Caracas, Venezuela, 10-21 February 1992) emphasized the relationship between people and PAs, and the need for, *inter alia*, the identification of sites of importance for biodiversity conservation, and a regional approach to land management. The Caracas Action Plan synthesized the strategic actions for PAs

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Allen Madden, indigenous elder, Eora Nation



Greg Hunt, Australian Minister for the Environment

over the decade 1992-2002 and provided a global framework for collective action. The Plan aimed to extend the PA network to cover at least 10% of each major biome by 2000.

FIFTH WORLD CONGRESS ON NATIONAL PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS: The fifth IUCN World Congress on National Parks (Durban, South Africa, 8-17 September 2003) focused on the “Benefits beyond boundaries” of conservation. Participants addressed gaps within PA systems by identifying under-represented ecosystems, defined tools to improve management effectiveness, sought new legal arrangements, and identified partnerships. The Congress produced several outcomes, three of which were: the Durban Accord and Action Plan, consisting of a high-level vision statement for PAs, and an outline of implementation mechanisms; 32 recommendations, approved by workshops during the Congress; and the Message to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Other outcomes included: the UN List and State of the World’s Protected Areas, a global report on the world’s PAs; a Protected Areas Learning Network (PALNet), a web-based knowledge management tool for PA managers and stakeholders; deliverables on Africa’s PAs, including a recommendation on regional PAs and the Durban Consensus on African Protected Areas for the New Millennium; and a handbook on Managing Protected Areas in the 21st Century, collating case studies, models and lessons learned during the Congress to constitute the “User Manual” for the Durban Accord.

CBD COP 2004: The seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 7) to the CBD took place from 9-20 February 2004, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Delegates adopted 33 decisions on, inter alia: biodiversity and tourism; monitoring and indicators; the ecosystem approach; biodiversity and climate change; mountain biodiversity; inland water ecosystems; marine and coastal biodiversity; PAs; access and benefit-sharing (ABS); technology transfer and cooperation; Article 8(j) (traditional knowledge); and national reporting.

The agenda gave parties to the Convention an opportunity to live up to one of its most significant challenges, namely to respond with concrete measures to the outcomes of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), including the target of significantly reducing biodiversity loss by 2010, and to position the CBD as the most appropriate and efficient policy framework to address biodiversity. The achievements of the meeting regarding ABS and PAs, supported by a framework for evaluating the implementation of the Convention’s Strategic Plan, provided a solid basis for the Convention to address its priorities in the medium and long term.

CBD COP 2010: The tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 10) to the CBD was held from 18-29 October 2010, in Nagoya, Japan. CBD COP 10 considered a series of strategic, substantive, administrative and budgetary issues, and adopted 47 decisions. Delegates also continued negotiations on an international ABS protocol and considered: a new strategic plan, targets and a multi-year programme of work (MYPOW)





Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)



Rob Stokes, New South Wales Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage

for the Convention; issues related to cooperation with other conventions, organizations and initiatives; and substantive issues, including marine and coastal biodiversity, climate change, forest biodiversity, biofuels, and Article 8(j). Following intense, late-night sessions, an impressive “package” was adopted, making COP 10 one of the most successful meetings in the history of the Convention. This package included the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization; the CBD Strategic Plan for the period 2011-2020, including a mission, and strategic goals and targets aiming to inspire broad-based action by parties and stakeholders; and a decision on activities and indicators for the implementation of the Strategy for Resource Mobilization adopted at COP 9. The meeting also: adopted a decision amounting to a *de facto* moratorium on geo-engineering; took a stance on the issue of synthetic biology, urging governments to apply the precautionary approach to the field release of synthetic life into the environment and acknowledging parties’ right to suspend it; affirmed the role of the CBD in reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, and forest conservation, sustainable forest management and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+); adopted the Tkarihwaié:ri code of ethical conduct; and established clear steps to increase cooperation among the Rio Conventions leading up to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20 Summit).

THIRD IMPAC MARINE CONGRESS: The third International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC), was held in Marseille, France, from 21-25 October 2013, followed by a high-level political meeting in Corsica, from 26-27 October. IMPAC convenes representatives from public management and planning agencies, research institutions, NGOs, coastal and island communities, and the private sector from around the world every four years to assist in the conservation and sustainable development of the oceans. The main focus of the third IMPAC Congress was to deliberate on strategies to meet CBD Aichi Target 11 under the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, which calls for at least 10% of all coastal and marine areas to be managed as conservation or protected areas by 2020. Some of the major recommendations included: converging local approaches and global strategies through mobilizing local and national networks, and binding them into a global network of marine protected areas (MPAs); forging partnerships with the private sector to advance governance and support spatial planning processes; and entering negotiations to reach and implement agreement of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), including the provision for the creation of high seas MPAs. These recommendations fed into the ministerial conference, which highlighted the need for conservation of the high seas through areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJs).

ASIA PARKS CONGRESS: The first Asia Parks Congress (APC) was held in Sendai, Japan, from 13-17 November 2013, as the first international conference bringing together PA





practitioners in Asia. The participants shared their experiences in managing PAs, including current status, challenges and best practices for PA management in Asia. The main objective of the meeting was to facilitate the establishment of a regional partnership for achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and implementation of the CBD's Programme of Work on Protected Areas. The outcomes of the Congress will be delivered to the sixth WPC in Sydney.

FOURTH MESOAMERICAN PARKS CONGRESS:

The fourth Mesoamerican Congress on Protected Areas was held in San José, Costa Rica, from 18-21 March 2014. This meeting is convened every three or four years to discuss, disseminate and exchange knowledge on planning, management, operation and development of biodiversity conservation in PAs, ecosystem services and the promotion of human welfare. Participants included academics and stakeholders from the Mesoamerican region, who during eight symposiums shared experiences and identified measures to improve Mesoamerican PAs, including through: governance; knowledge management; management and planning; using PAs as a tool for social and economic development; implementing climate change solutions through PAs; cooperation and financing for PA management; and policies as instruments of PA consolidation.

NAMIBIAN HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE: This high-level event on improving PA governance for livelihood security and biodiversity in southern Africa was held in Windhoek, Namibia, from 21-22 May 2014. Over the two days of stocktaking on PA governance within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), delegates: assessed ways for PAs to deliver benefits for local communities and biodiversity; discussed priorities for enhancing the resilience of PAs to future pressures and challenges; considered challenges facing the region's PAs, including human-wildlife conflict, competition for water, wildlife-livestock disease transmission, and contested rights to land and wildlife; and identified strategies to mitigate the impacts of these conflicts on PAs, communities and biodiversity, while recognizing that pressures, such as climate change and the conversion of land into uses that are biodiversity-incompatible, are likely to further exacerbate these conflicts in the future.

SOUTH AMERICAN PARKS CONGRESS: The second Colombian Protected Areas Congress was held in Bogotá, Colombia, from 16-18 July 2014. Convening under the theme, "Protected areas: territories for peace and life," the Congress built on commitments from the first meeting, which took place in 2009, including consolidation of the national PA system within the framework of the CBD's Programme of Work on



(L-R): Luvuyo Mandela, great-grandson of Nelson Mandela and Champion of WPC 2014, and Barbara Thomson, Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs, South Africa



Patrons and champions of the WPC 2014

Protected Areas. The main objectives of the Congress included: positioning PAs, subsystems and complementary conservation strategies as territories for life and peace, in light of the new economic and social development challenges of Colombia; assessing social and environmental dynamics in urban and rural landscapes, and developing complementary strategies to address these challenges for PA management; and creating opportunities for cultural exchange, knowledge sharing and social valuation of PAs in Colombia.

OPENING CEREMONY

The IUCN World Parks Congress (WPC) 2014 opened in Sydney, Australia, with an indigenous “welcome to country” ceremony to the sounds of the didgeridoo. Participants viewed an indigenous dance performance and a video of Australia’s natural wonders.

Allen Madden, indigenous elder, welcomed all participants on behalf of the 29 clans of the Eora Nation, bounded by the Hawkesbury, Nepean and Georges rivers, stating that this “was, is, and always will be Aboriginal land.”

IUCN President Zhang Xinsheng highlighted that since the previous WPC in Durban, South Africa, protected areas (PAs) have doubled, with marine protected areas (MPAs) experiencing the most dramatic growth. He noted however that the ultimate goal involves “more than numbers,” and urged instead having a society that values and conserves nature, saying that PAs represent “age-old survival strategies.”

On the need for investments in remote PAs, Zhang said that PAs provide benefits beyond their boundaries in the form of food, water and medicine, and that “nature recharges our minds



President Ali Bongo Ondimba, Gabon

and rekindles our sense of wonder.” He noted the Durban Congress’s recognition of the diverse ways in which PAs are governed around the world, and the role of indigenous people as custodians. Zhang suggested that PAs could be part of the solution to address climate change through storing carbon, and promoting resilience in the face of floods and droughts. Stressing that “learning never ends,” he urged everyone to work together “for parks, people, and our planet.”

Greg Hunt, Australian Minister for the Environment, announced that indigenous PAs have enabled his country to achieve the IUCN’s goals for PAs. He highlighted several recent government initiatives, including a ban on dumping of dredge spoil in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

Robert Stokes, New South Wales Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage, reported that his state is home to the Royal National Park, Australia’s second largest national park, and announced the newly-created Everlasting Swamp National Park.

Delivering a message on behalf of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), underscored the role of PAs in safeguarding the global environment from some of the greatest environmental threats, and noted that PAs: are effective tools for conserving species and natural habitats; store 15% of the global terrestrial carbon stock; and support livelihoods of more than one billion people. He noted progress since the last WPC, including toward Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 (on expanding terrestrial and marine PAs) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). He further described WPC 2014 as an opportunity to build on the achievements made over the last ten years and set the agenda for PAs for the next decade, while taking into account the role of PAs in mitigating the impacts of climate change and conserving biodiversity. He called upon the Congress to “work toward a global commitment to safeguard one of the planet’s most precious resources, protected areas.”

Noting that eleven years had passed since the first WPC on African soil, Barbara Thomson, Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs, South Africa, outlined her country’s progress on PAs and related work since that time, including: efforts to ensure local communities’ participation in, and benefiting from, the conservation of PAs; passing of conservation laws relating to the governance of land areas, and access and benefit sharing; and expansion of the PA network. She described WPC 2014 as an opportunity for learning from each other, and working in partnership to sustain, protect and conserve nature for future generations.



IUCN Chair Ernesto Enkerlin Hoeflich



Jessica Watson, the youngest person ever to sail solo and unassisted around the world

Luvuyo Mandela, great-grandson of Nelson Mandela and Champion of WPC 2014, thanked participants for their passionate dedication and efforts, and called upon the IUCN community to “continue to honour an old man who left you with the charge to continue to include young people in your efforts.”

In a film, participants were reminded of Nelson Mandela’s speech at WPC 2003, in which he stressed the significance of educating people on the importance of nature for our future, noting that “the future is, after all, in the hands of the youth.”

Four junior rangers from South Africa and Australia came together in a symbolic passing of the WPC torch between the nations. They issued a call to action to global youth, stressing they constitute “the hope and solutions for the future” of PAs. Following this, the co-hosts officially recognized the patrons and champions of WPC 2014.

Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of Gabon and Co-Patron of WPC 2014, underscored the importance of implementing commitments made at the WPCs and under the Aichi



Biodiversity Targets of the CBD. He provided examples from his country’s recent achievements in expanding the terrestrial PA network coverage to 21% of the national territory, and integrating biodiversity into national land-use planning and management of Gabon’s marine Exclusive Economic Zone. President Ondimba announced Gabon’s decision to create a network of MPAs to cover 23% of its territorial waters. He urged participants to make a pledge in Sydney to take action on climate change, and support the men and women working in national park agencies who sometimes risk their lives to combat wildlife crime.

IUCN Chair Ernesto Enkerlin Hoeflich, together with Jessica Watson, the youngest person ever to sail solo and unassisted around the world, officially opened the Congress. In conclusion, delegates watched acrobatic dance performances with a storyline on inspiring the next generation to care for the environment and protected areas around the world, before attending a welcome reception.



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