



**THE SECOND SESSION OF THE IUCN WORLD
CONSERVATION CONGRESS
WEDNESDAY, 4 OCTOBER 2000**

The Second Session of the IUCN World Conservation Congress was officially opened at an evening ceremony on Wednesday, 4 October, in Amman, Jordan. More than 2,000 individuals from 140 countries representing governments, UN agencies, NGOs and the private sector are expected to participate in the Congress, which will convene through 11 October to address the theme of "Ecospace."

The opening of the Congress was preceded by the first Earth Forum, a day long meeting co-hosted by the Earth Council and IUCN which brought together experts to debate "Where are we going? Prospects for the earth in the new millennium."

OPENING CEREMONY

Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan opened the ceremony at the Amman Roman Theater, requesting a moment of prayer for those suffering in the region. Ruba Assaf, Jordanian Television, welcomed participants, noting that the Congress marks the largest environmental meeting in the region.

Mohammad Halaikah, Deputy Prime Minister of Jordan, underscored Jordan's commitment to the environment, highlighting the process underway for establishing a Ministry of Environment. He championed IUCN's debt for nature initiative and emphasized IUCN's advocacy role in assisting governments to address issues such as trade liberalization, genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and transboundary concerns. Highlighting Jordan's awareness of environmental sources of conflict, he stressed Jordan's determination to ease conflict through transboundary cooperation to manage scarce resources. He hoped the Congress would prove an important juncture in the development of global environmental policy.

Klaus Töpfer, UNEP Executive Director, delivered good wishes from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. He said conservation and development must be made the twin criteria of human progress, and stressed the need to learn to live off of nature's dividends instead of its capital. Regarding biodiversity, he noted the serious economic and social costs of its loss and stressed that the respect for ecological diversity implies respect for human diversity. He flagged environmental security as part of future peace policy. He suggested sending a signal from Amman that all must join efforts to make the world a better one through sustainable development.

Maurice Strong, Chairman of the Earth Council, overviewed progress since UNCED, noting that it has not been significant, that the Earth Charter is still unfinished business, and that the current focus needs to be civil society and partnerships. He stressed that the role of civil society has increased, with globalization as a focal point. He urged the members of the Congress to give the Earth Charter their blessing. Regarding poverty eradication, he remarked that "the poor are preoccupied with their next meal, the rich with their next deal."

Yolanda Kakabadse, IUCN President, expressed gratitude to Queen Noor for her dedication to IUCN. She said current environmental devastation is beyond human comprehension and identified biodiversity loss as the world's most pressing crisis. She hoped the conference will make a difference for the Earth.

Queen Noor welcomed participants on behalf of His Majesty King Abdullah II and regretted that he was not present due to State duties. She remarked that His Majesty King Hussein had also been a supporter of the Congress. She noted that although IUCN has been effective at the grassroots, national and international levels, regional issues have been neglected. She stressed that environmental security cannot exist without peaceful cooperation between States, and that environmental protection is a pre-requisite for socioeconomic security. She flagged water scarcity as the predicted main source of conflict. She proposed that Arabic be adopted as one of IUCN's official languages and urged all religions to unite through their mutual respect for nature.

THE EARTH FORUM

Maritta Koch-Weser, Director-General of IUCN, welcomed participants, including representatives of the Jordanian Royal Family. She emphasized the importance of expanding dialogue beyond the inner environment circle and suggested future Earth Forums be held on the margins of climate change or biodiversity convention meetings with private sector, civil society and scientific representatives. Prince Talal Ibn Mohammad read a letter on behalf of King Abdullah II, which noted Jordan's environmental commitment as an essential component of building a culture of peace. Maurice Strong, Earth Council Chairman, said the Earth Forum is designed as a "town hall" of the global village to open dialogue on big questions but not to exhaustively examine all issues. Klaus Schwab, President, World Economic Forum, stressed that the Earth Forum's thematic sessions were designed with an integrated approach in terms of stakeholders, geography and systems.

IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUSTAINABLE?

José Maria Figueres Olson, former President of Costa Rica, called for a change in development trends and for encouraging sustainability-oriented business. He supported the creation of international development indicators and the implementation of "bio-literacy" among new generations.

Ralph Petersen, CEO, CH2Mhill, noted that although eco-efficiency is part of the new corporate mindset, the operational terms of sustainability should be defined. He said marketplace pressures and time constraints curb companies' impetus to address sustainability. He noted corporations lack awareness of the risks of expanding production and natural resources exploitation.

Marshall Gysi, Managing Director, International Federation of Consulting Engineers, presented guidelines committing industries to, and involving all stakeholders in, the goals of sustainable development. He highlighted the role of the Federation in helping clients meet international environmental responsibilities.

On accomplishments since UNCED, Alicia Barcena, Director of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, noted Hanover's Expo 2000, the World Economic Forum's Sustainable Development Index, the Earth Council's Earth Charter and local implementation of Agenda 21. She stressed the importance of bioregional approaches like the Meso-American Biological Corridor, and of changing investment patterns, such as through the emerging global environmental services market.

In the following discussion, participants raised issues, including: food security; the North's failure to meet sustainable development financing responsibilities; the need for global ethical principles; and the International Organization for Standardization's tool for sustainable business practices (ISO 14,000).

In closing, panelists suggested actions to achieve sustainable development. Gysi stressed political support. Peterson supported the collection and dissemination of information for decision-making and consensus building, and accelerated preparation of the Business Social Responsibility Code. Olson noted: macroeconomic needs; elimination of subsidies; payment for environmental services; and a tax system based on natural resource use. Barcena proposed a meeting to discuss GMOs, climate change and critical ecosystems.

CIVIL SOCIETY: "LOYAL" OPPOSITION OR PARTNERS IN GOVERNANCE?

Elizabeth Odio, Vice President of Costa Rica, emphasized that addressing poverty must be a first priority in the global effort to protect the environment. As a member of government, she described making difficult choices and the need for consultation. She noted that natural resources cannot be protected by excluding local communities and said that Costa Rican national parks are co-managed with civil society. Yolanda Kakabadse, President of IUCN, remarked that during UNCED civil society was involved to an unprecedented degree. She expressed confusion about demonstrations in Seattle and Prague where she saw the interests of environmental NGOs being subsumed by those of other groups.

Claude Martin, Director General, WWF International, said civil society represents many agendas and noted issues regarding NGO accountability. He urged greater media involvement to divert attention from demonstrations to the substance of the debates. He commended cross-sectoral partnerships, such as the Forest Stewardship Council.

Klaus Töpfer, UNEP Executive Director, said civil society is not a monolithic block. He underscored fighting the negative effects of globalization to maintain cultural diversity and within the context of society. He said the poor must be given the opportunity to organize and voice their interests, and underscored the importance of land tenure and democratically elected decision makers.

Maximo Kalaw, Executive Director, National Council for Sustainable Development Programme, said public interest is omitted from markets and is thus the responsibility of civil society. He said civil society, economics and politics must converge to form a political process for democratic development policies, and called for basic human security rights.

In the discussion, participants remarked that: promises for debt cancellation should be respected; civil society varies in developed and developing countries; and partnerships must be better defined. In closing remarks, Kakabadse urged the environmental movement to maintain its own identity. Odio said government is not the enemy of civil society. Töpfer cited the Global Compact as a model of partnership. Martin said the public and media are looking for good stories, and stressed that the world is governed by information, not just civil society.

EMERGING ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICTS: HOW DO WE DEAL WITH THEM?

Mark Halle, European Director and Coordinator, IISD Environment and Security Task Force, said resource scarcity, environmental mismanagement, and growing population and consumption levels are as much root causes of violent conflicts as natural disasters. He suggested sound resource management could reduce the costs of humanitarian relief.

Richard Matthew, Assistant Professor of International and Environmental Politics, University of California at Irvine, highlighted environmental stress and resultant social impacts, including increased vulnerability to natural disasters and violent conflicts. He remarked that exposure to severe environmental stress corresponds to levels of industrialization and noted that early warning systems require prohibitive quantities of data.

Mohamed Sahnoun, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General, said most violent conflicts are caused by the combination of environmental degradation and economic and social predicaments. He said governments and groups tend to exploit populations' fears linked to resource scarcity, thereby compelling people to contribute, out of necessity, to the degradation of their environment.

Juan Mayr, Minister of Environment of Colombia, discussed general issues of local, national, regional, and global environmental conflict, including: identifying stakeholders; finding a common language; and seeking innovative, creative solutions.

Frans van Haren, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Brazil, focused on a new conflict management initiative, the International Ombudsman Center for Environment and Development, an investigation and mediation approach in cooperation with NGOs and stakeholders.

In the ensuing discussion, one participant noted that before embarking on a potentially controversial project, such as a large dam, all stakeholders must fully consider the consequences to avoid conflict. Another highlighted communities' and individuals' feelings of insecurity resulting from poor environmental conditions, yet global spending on military security exceeds environment budgets by billions. She underscored that a shift in public expenditures is essential to save the planet from becoming an "ugly social place."

CAN WE AFFORD THE FUTURE?

Timothy Wirth, President of the United Nations Foundation, proposed titling Rio+10 the Conference on Globalization and the Environment, to focus on the connections between the environment, poverty and globalization. On energy, Jose Goldemberg, University of São Paulo, stressed the need to reduce fossil fuel use and to redirect developing country energy funding into sustainable projects.

Yasuo Goto, Chairman Emeritus, Keidanren Committee on Nature Conservation, discussed the initiatives of Keidanren, a federation of Japanese economic organizations supporting nature conservation in the Asia Pacific region. He proposed an "Environmental Big Bang" approach, combining technological development and transformation of institutions and values, implemented through the action of civil society organizations with private sector support and partnership.

Joe Firmage, Chairman & CEO, Project Voyager, described the rapid developments in Silicon Valley and called for a "reprogramming" of the economic machine. He questioned why the free market can attribute US\$50 billion to Yahoo, an Internet search engine, based on the anticipation of future value, but is unable to anticipate the future value of a productive society in Africa. He noted that taxation of natural resources may reduce consumption, but could limit access only to the wealthy.

Joke Waller-Hunter, Environment Directorate, OECD, questioned whether we are spending enough to ensure the type of environmental future people want and whether governments underestimate the willingness of people to pay for such a future. She stressed looking at social benefits of environmental investments.

In the discussion, one participant called for technology transfer while another requested that sustainability in the North be addressed. In concluding observations, Waller-Hunter highlighted the importance of investment in human capital. Firmage made a distinction between capitalism and the free market and called for identification of systemic challenges. Goldemberg supported measures regulating the public good and urged environmentalists to pressure governments.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

Six parallel interactive sessions will convene from 9:00am-12:00pm and from 2:00-5:00pm to address: ecosystem management in mountains, watersheds and river basins; environmental health of island, coastal and marine ecosystems; environment and security - a new strategic role for IUCN; forest ecospace, biodiversity and environmental security; ecospace and a global culture for sustainability; and strategies for averting the world water crisis.