



IUCN Congress Bulletin

A Daily Report of the 3rd IUCN World Conservation Congress

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Left photo: Queen Sirikit of Thailand receives the IUCN Gold Medal from Princess Takamado of Japan. Right photo: Achim Steiner, IUCN Director General, and Yolanda Kakabadse, IUCN President, greet Thaksin Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand.

3RD IUCN WCC HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2004

Convening under the theme of “People and Nature – only one world,” the 3rd IUCN World Conservation Congress officially opened on Wednesday, 17 November, at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre in Bangkok, Thailand. The Congress comprises three principal elements: the Commissions at Work, which met from 15-17 November to assess the work of IUCN’s six global Commissions; the World Conservation Forum, which will convene from 18-20 November to take stock of biodiversity conservation; and the Member’s Business Assembly, which will be conducted from 21-25 November to address core governance issues of the organization.

OPENING CEREMONY

Thaksin Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand, opened the 3rd IUCN World Conservation Congress and expressed appreciation for the presence of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit Kitiyakara of Thailand. He outlined the wide-ranging agenda of the Congress, noting its objectives of sharing experience and defining appropriate ways to bring about global sustainability. Highlighting Her Majesty’s Royal Projects, he announced that IUCN was to award her the IUCN Gold Medal in recognition for her contribution towards biodiversity conservation.

Welcoming participants to the Congress, Yolanda Kakabadse, IUCN President, emphasized the critical importance of engaging indigenous and local communities in conservation initiatives, and stressed the role of biodiversity conservation in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). She drew attention to IUCN’s achievements since the 2nd World Conservation Congress, including its role in supporting the international community to adopt agreements such as those emanating from the World Summit

on Sustainable Development, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the Vth IUCN World Parks Congress.

Kakabadse outlined four main challenges for the Congress: information and technology; loss of biodiversity; the role of the private sector; and the connection between biodiversity conservation and human well-being. On information and technology, she called for more equitable access to scientific knowledge and information, enhanced information sharing and technology transfer, and recognition of indigenous and traditional knowledge. On biodiversity loss, she called attention to the effects of unsustainable development, and stressed that cities must not “turn their backs” on rural communities. Kakabadse acknowledged Thailand for recognizing the importance of biological and cultural diversity, highlighted Queen Sirikit’s commitment to the environment, and praised Thailand for carrying out conservation projects and integrating rural and urban communities. On the role of the private sector, she emphasized the need for corporate responsibility towards sustainable development and biodiversity conservation. She noted that corporations are increasingly

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Yolanda Kakabadse stresses the importance of engaging local communities in conservation initiatives.

aware of the interdependence of biodiversity and their own long-term growth, and recognized that some conservationists are not comfortable with working with profit-making organizations. She highlighted IUCN's role in fostering dialogue between these stakeholders, and in providing advice and support to companies interested in conservation. On biodiversity conservation and human well-being, Kakabadse invited participants to develop ways that promote biodiversity conservation and embrace the interest of human well-being as another challenge to overcome.

Princess Takamado of Japan highlighted the contribution of Queen Sirikit's Royal Projects to the conservation of Thailand's environment, and commended their benefits of increasing sustainability within rural communities. On behalf of IUCN, she presented Queen Sirikit the IUCN Gold Medal, recognizing her continued commitment and dedication towards conservation.

Queen Sirikit welcomed all participants to the Congress, stating that she was honored for having been presented with the Medal. She expressed her appreciation for the dedication of Thailand's scientists towards a sustainable future, and said their efforts have contributed to the country's conservation successes. She underscored the need for the global community to increase efforts in conservation and said that her dream was for all people around the globe to become stewards of the environment. She stressed her hope that the Congress would be a great success not only for those attending, but for the entire global community.

Participants viewed a video presentation on various Royal Projects initiated by Queen Sirikit, including on rehabilitating mangroves, improving rural livelihoods, managing forests for water conservation, and wild flora research.

COMMISSIONS AT WORK

COMMISSION ON EDUCATION AND

COMMUNICATION (CEC): Chaired by Denise Hamú, the CEC convened for a Steering Committee Meeting on 15 November and the CEC Member's Meeting from 16-17 November. Over 80 participants heard a report on activities of the Commission in achieving its mandate from 2000-2004, including on: education and communication for environmental conventions; the forthcoming UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development; and professional capacity development through the World Conservation Learning Network. Commission members also discussed the development of key strategies at the global and regional levels in order to advance the planning of the CEC's new mandate for the 2005-2008 programme of work.

COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICY (CEESP): Chaired by Taghi Farvar, the CEESP convened for a Steering Committee Meeting on 15 November. On 16 November, a joint meeting of the Collaborative Management of Natural Resources and the Sustainable Livelihoods Working Groups, and a meeting of the Theme on Indigenous and Local Communities, Equity and Protected Areas (TILCEPA) were held to review the working groups' respective activities. On 17 November, a Member's Meeting took place to hear reports on activities during 2000-2004, and address issues relating to the CEESP's mandate and priorities for 2005-2008.

COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL LAW (CEL): Chaired by Nicholas Robinson, the CEL convened for a Steering Committee Meeting on 15 November and a Member's Meeting from 16-17 November. Justices from 15 countries gathered for a "Judiciary Day" from 16-17 November to explore and analyze the link between environment, human rights and the role of the judiciary, and to discuss judiciary ethics and the role of citizens in accessing the courts. Organized by IUCN's Environmental Law Programme, with the participation of UNEP, UNDP, FAO, the World Bank, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from Brazil, Italy, Ukraine and the United States, this session provided an overview of global initiatives to build the capacity of the judiciary to address environmental issues.



Thaksin Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand, opened the 3rd IUCN World Conservation Congress.

COMMISSION ON ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

(CEM): Chaired by Hillary Masundire, the CEM convened for a Steering Committee Meeting on 16 November and a Member's Meeting from 16-17 November. During the meetings, the members, comprising anthropologists, economists, ecologists and other experts, reviewed conservation experiences on applying practical tools and approaches for managing and restoring ecosystems. They also engaged in discussions on further testing and disseminating these tools, and on the indicators needed to measure their effectiveness. Achim Steiner, IUCN Director General, challenged the CEM to provide leadership to the Union's efforts to integrate biodiversity conservation with the improvement of human well-being.

SPECIES SURVIVAL COMMISSION (SSC): Chaired by David Brackett, the SCC Executive and Steering Committees gathered on 15 November, and a Member's Meeting was held on 16-17 November. Members identified four critical issues that need to be addressed by the SSC: ensuring the compatibility of the Species Information Service (SIS) and Conservation and Management Planning (CAMP) databases; improving information flows from SSC specialists to the Red List; enhancing training; and improving communication of the Red List Criteria. Participants stressed the relevance of the Red List Index in meeting the 2010 biodiversity target and of similar tools to influence the international decision-making processes on biodiversity. In addition to hearing presentations by the SSC Specialist Groups on their achievements during the 2000-2004 period, members attended a training session on fundraising and policymaking.

WORLD COMMISSION ON PROTECTED AREAS

(WCPA): Chaired by Kenton Miller, the WCPA Steering Committee met on 15 November and a Member's Meeting took place on 16-17 November. Recognizing the relevance of the Durban Accord and the CBD Programme of Work on protected areas, members underscored the WCPA's challenge to support the implementation of these agreements. Members also identified priority areas, including: addressing global change; ensuring better management and enhanced financing; involving local communities; increasing public support; and establishing a global representative system of protected areas.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF IUCN AND THE WCC

IUCN – The World Conservation Union was established in 1948 as an independent scientific organization devoted to “influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.” Today IUCN comprises 81 State members, 112 government agencies, 33 affiliates, and 807 NGOs, of which 77 are international organizations. The IUCN Secretariat consists of about 1,000 staff, with some 100 individuals at its headquarters in Gland, Switzerland, and approximately 900 staff working in offices located in 42 countries around the world. IUCN has six global Commissions, constituting a network of some 10,000 volunteer experts committed to global biodiversity conservation. The Commissions focus on: ecosystem management; education and communication; environmental, economic and social policy; environmental law; species survival; and protected areas.

IUCN is governed by its Council, whose members are elected by the World Conservation Congress. The Council typically meets at least once a year to set the annual budget, decide major policy issues, and review IUCN's programme implementation. Also elected by the Congress is the IUCN President, who chairs the Council and guides IUCN's work between Congresses. IUCN member organizations form national or regional committees that play an important role in priority setting, programming, membership coordination and programme implementation.

IUCN's contributions to conservation are numerous, including assistance in the development of national environmental legislation



Princess Takamado presented an overview of Queen Sirikit's conservation projects.

and international environmental conventions such as the 1971 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the 1972 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Convention, the 1975 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), the 1979 Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the 1982 World Charter for Nature, and the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). IUCN was also the driving force behind the World Conservation Strategy, *Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living*, and the Global Biodiversity Strategy, initiatives that introduced concepts such as sustainable development, biodiversity and ecosystem management.

IUCN has been instrumental in developing conservation programmes for major ecosystem types, including forests, wetlands and coastal areas. Drawing on its global network of experts, IUCN identifies categories of threatened species and produces species action plans, as well as publishes Red Lists and Red Data Books, which detail the status and conservation needs of threatened and endangered species. IUCN also plays a critical role in supporting protected areas worldwide, publishing the UN List of Protected Areas, convening the World Parks Congress, and disseminating

guidelines on protected area management issues. The most recent World Parks Congress was held in September 2003 in Durban, South Africa, and produced among other things the Durban Accord, a high-level vision statement for protected areas.

The World Conservation Congress meets every four years and is the general assembly of IUCN members. The main functions of the Congress are, inter alia, to: define the general policy of IUCN; make recommendations to governments and to national and international organizations on matters related to IUCN's objectives; receive and consider the reports of the Director General, Treasurer, Chairs of Commissions and Regional Committees; receive the auditors report and approve the audited accounts; determine member dues; consider and approve the IUCN Programme and financial plan for the intersessional period; determine the number of Commissions and their mandates; and elect the President, Treasurer, Regional Councillors and Chairs of Commissions. The Congress also offers a forum for debate on how best to conserve nature and ensure that natural resources are used equitably and sustainably.

The 1st IUCN World Conservation Congress was held from 12-23 October 1996 in Montreal, Canada, and evolved from the 19 General Assemblies that preceded it, the first of which saw the founding of the organization. Over 2,000 participants from 130 countries attended the first Congress, whose theme was "Caring for the Earth." The 2nd IUCN World Conservation Congress met from 4-11 October 2000 in Amman, Jordan, where some 2,000 individuals from 140 countries representing governments, government agencies, UN bodies, NGOs and the private sector were in attendance. The Congress' theme was "Ecospace" – a concept that conveys the message that transboundary management of ecosystems is vital for the environmental agenda.

