

Day 4: Closing Ceremony

Closing Remarks

Mr. S.C. Sharma

**Addl. IGF (WL), Ministry of Environment & Forests,
Government of India**

The strength of IUCN is its **capacity to recognise a problem**, bring all the stakeholders together, organise a debate, and at the end, reach a solution that is acceptable to all relevant quarters. IUCN has been very imaginative in this regard. Even in the day-to-day work in the ministry, whenever there is any technical problem, one or another guidelines prepared by IUCN are consulted. Hence, IUCN has developed ethics for almost everything, and they have been developed on the basis of a very **detailed and global consultation**.

Mr. Swaminathan in his keynote speech said that the only complaint against IUCN has been that in the past it was **Euro-centric**. However, no, it has been trying to become global and **earth-centric**. There is a feeling among many that it should rather be **eco-centric**.

Holding this conference in India is very appropriate because India is at the **tri-junction of the following bio-regimes**: the Indo-Himalayan regime, Arctic regime and Afro-tropical regime. A very high number of animal species are found here representing a very rich biodiversity. Furthermore, the three religions - Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, which preach conservation as a way of life - evolved from this country. This region could contribute significantly to the changing of attitudes and minds toward environmental conservation at the global level.

Whatever wisdom, knowledge, and technology Asia may possess, unless the populace lives in **harmony with nature**, nobody is going to feel at home.

Special Address

Dr. Maritta Koch-Wesser

Director General, IUCN

IUCN now has a **new programme outline**, which has been presented to the forum for deliberation. Are we setting the right priorities, the right vision for the IUCN? Are we finding the right niche as the World Conservation Union tries to be of service to a large diversity of member organisations and individuals in the Commissions? These are some of the questions considered during deliberation.

Considering the resolutions formulated four years ago in Montreal, a lot has been achieved since then. Nonetheless, whatever has been achieved is relatively small in regard to the challenges out there. Unfortunately, factors that work against the environment can work very quickly, and it is hard to achieve no matter how committed everyone is. However, one should take satisfaction from the course this meeting has taken and from the strong desire to intensify not just national level interactions but also **regional level interactions** in the time to come. IUCN has only taken the first steps toward decentralisation and into true globalisation. IUCN decided to decentralise proactively in 1994. While IUCN can take great satisfaction from where it is today, the

IUCN should also take this as an impetus to engage more and more deeply here in the region.

Two distinct thoughts emerged out of the programme presentations. One is that the IUCN community must be careful, in order to **maintain its credibility**, to rank appropriately priorities and actions, and then accomplish them either directly through the IUCN Commissions, IUCN Secretariat, IUCN member organisations or through third or fourth party organisations via collaborative arrangements. But the **filters**, which are set in the programme, must be applied appropriately.

Secondly, IUCN and its friends should think in terms of **concentric circles**; when a stone is thrown in the water, there is the first ring or circle that initially emerges. It is realistic to believe that this is what can be achieved. However, there are second and third rings. These are higher targets that could be achieved if the IUCN community can raise sufficient resources through effective fund raising if it is entrepreneurial, if it supports its institutions forgetting all the small differences, and if it gets together in coalitions.

Regarding the IUCN programme, one thing that has been built in over the last years, with the help of many in the room, is an improved feedback system. A programme is only worthwhile if there exist excellent monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems: not just reporting to donors but reporting back to everyone concerned. Hopefully, this will act as a **powerful driver** within the programme.

Special emphasis must be given to the **need for increased communication**. Everyone should see this as a collective enterprise. From IUCN Headquarters the Secretariat will try to do its share. Increased active participation in the Commissions and within the region is also highly anticipated so that this becomes a dense web of inter-institutional and inter-personal communication. IUCN is a committed, driven, network organisation; let us work both the values and the network together.

Bio-geography and Conservation Methods in India

Dr. V. P. Mathur

Wildlife Institute of India

This is a glimpse of the conservation initiatives taken by India for planning a network of protected areas on a **bio-geographically representative basis**. This endeavour was initiated by Alan Rogers and Hemendrapama, both of whom are internationally renowned conservationists. India is among the select few nations who have applied modern bio-geographic concepts for planning rational conservation strategies. A sound scientific framework is essential for establishing a network of protected areas and for conserving the biological diversities of the country. This initiative started in 1988 when the MoEF requested the WII to prepare bio-geographic classification to facilitate conservation planning.

This classification, like all classifications, is **hierarchical** in nature. It seeks to protect and promote biologically rich communities, and it is based on a framework and established practices of conservation biology. It recognised 10 zones in the country; the entire range of biodiversity is captured within these unique 10 zones. These zones are then further divided into 26 provinces that provide a much **wider framework and canvas** for protecting the rich biological diversities in the country.

What have the classification and review given us? They have provided a very simple and scientific framework for planning conservation efforts in India. In the context of the **growth of the PA network**, today there are 86 national parks corresponding to IUCN Category II, and they cover about 1.1% of the country's geographical area. India has 480

wildlife sanctuaries corresponding to IUCN Category IV covering about 3.5% of the country's total area. Before the initiation of the network in 1988, the total protected area was only 3.4% of the total geographic area, but today it has reached 4.6%. Furthermore, the network has plans and proposals to extend this network to 6% of the country's geographical area. This would be quite significant as very few countries in the world have more than 5% of their land area under a PA system.

In order to identify gaps in the network's coverage, each park and sanctuary in the country has been mapped and marked. A new step has also been taken to **develop an atlas**. This particular atlas will capture the entire country into 87 tiles, and each tile will provide information on the bio-geographic status, eco-regions, status of state boundaries, and the network of the states. Hence, this atlas will be a **planning tool** for developers so that they can identify which areas are no-development zones or are eco-sensitive sites and thus restricted from any development work. However, WII wishes to share its experiences with the rest of the IUCN community worldwide, especially with those in the region, in order to elaborate and cooperate in the endeavour to make a bio-geographically represented network for the entire region.

Closing Remarks

Ms. Yolanda Kakabadse
President, IUCN

The results of this meeting bring home several relevant points. This is the first time that the constituency in Asia has been involved in producing a proposal for action, sending it to headquarters and then discussing, analysing, criticising and finally endorsing the programme. This is **true decentralisation**. During these last four days, participants from the region have been deciding its priorities, when it wants results and who would participate. This is **true regionalisation**, and IUCN has been pushing for this in the last few years; it is becoming a reality with very good results.

This was also an opportunity to better **understand the Union**. This is the strangest union in the world for a number of reasons. For instance, it allows government representatives and NGOs to sit together and discuss on equal terms the needs and solutions. The ways in which it works are probably very effective given the fact that it has survived for nearly 52 years. That is a very powerful message.

There have been important needs expressed by the members. One of them is to build up the **regional structure for governance**. There has been a call for **more membership participation**. The message of this particular assembly is that it wants the Commissions to be stronger, more active, and more visible. Up till now, it has been the Commissions themselves who wanted to be visible, but they had not found a way because there was no room for growth. Now that space has been created.

Another strong message coming out of this forum is that, quite exceptionally, there are five IUCN Councillors and two Commission Chairs participating in this forum. Furthermore, there is a strong presence here of donors and partners, and they would not be here if they did not realise the importance of this forum. Hopefully, all of them are taking a long list of recommendations home to their own institutions.

Now there is another step that lies ahead, and it is the World Conservation Congress in Amman, which meets only in a few months time. Thus, everyone should continue communicating and working on the issues that have come up during these sessions that still need to be worked out. Thus, in Amman there will be some thoughtful ideas, proposals, and concerns that can be expressed and debated in during the Congress.

A small group of people from this distinguished gathering has gone tree planting today. And in the name of this gathering, in the name of IUCN members in the region, they have planted some trees. Now planting a tree means that some roots have been seeded here in India. Those roots will grow. It also means that when one plants a tree, one must come back and see what has happened to that tree. And that is a promise to keep.

Valedictory Address

**H.E. Mr. Suresh Prabhu,
Honourable Union Minister for Chemicals & Fertilisers,
Government of India**

IUCN has done some great work in the past few years in the Asia region. The most important part of that work has involved bringing all the stakeholders together. There are two poles involved in the environmental struggle. One of them fights for the environment and the other one fights with the environment. Bringing both of them together is a very difficult task. To secure a future, these two warring factions need to be brought together; there are those who feel that the environment is a 'bogey' and those who feel that conservation at any cost is of paramount importance. In this context, IUCN must be congratulated for its effort to bring together the stakeholders: governmental and nongovernmental organisations alike.

One of the major environmental concerns of late is climate change. There is a misconception that throughout the history of mankind humans have plundered the Earth's resources and nothing has happened. Unfortunately, areas where it had never snowed before are now experiencing snow or places that used to have pleasant tropical weather are now experiencing heatwaves. As a result of this climate change, the sea-level water is rising and probably will dislocate a large number of people in the years to come if adequate actions are not immediately taken.

To bring about sustainable environmental development, total change in the life-styles of people is warranted. However, to change attitudes, actions need to be initiated by the nongovernmental organisations first so that then governments could act on those catering to the needs of the people. And this would be a good partnership, a good alliance, and a good coalition that could substantially contribute toward solving the problems.

Asia is a paradoxical land as it is probably the richest region in terms of biodiversity but also the poorest people in the world live in the region. Therefore, IUCN's theme of a just world that values and conserves the nature is very appropriate for Asia. In this context, two very distinct characteristics of Asia need to be mentioned - its ancient civilisation (i.e. cultures and religions) and its huge population. All the ancient scriptures here talk about conservation, and they could be a platform to work and dwell upon. But the other characteristic, which acts as a potential threat to the biodiversity of the world, is that this is one of most populous regions in the world. This growing population exerts pressure on the land and agriculture and is putting a serious strain on the biodiversity of the region. However, the proposed working themes and actions for IUCN's programme for the next four years will certainly help to realise the collective objectives of environmental conservation.

IUCN must be lauded for its effort to act locally and think globally. To accomplish this, IUCN has come to the region to draw up a programme, which will go to its headquarters, and then headquarters will implement the programme. If everyone followed this approach, then this could be the best insurance against the abuse of biodiversity. The Government of India drew up a programme of joint forest management involving local people to work with the government agencies. More programmes need to

be designed in which local people can be involved in conservation while their economic rights remain assured. One of the multilateral agencies in the UN family has the working motto of **three Es - Environment, Economy and Employment**. If it is possible to integrate all three Es, then in fact local communities would be able to engage in economic activities without endangering the surrounding biodiversity.

Vote of Thanks

Ms. Aban Marker Kabraji

Regional Director, IUCN Asia Region

It is a rare occasion when one can thank people because one genuinely means it with a vote of gratitude for all they have done.

The Honourable Minister, Mr. Suresh Prabhu, must be praised for his help and encouragement during his days as the Minister of Environment, which led to an invitation to the IUCN by Mr. S.C. Sharma and his team in Kota Kinabalu to hold the Regional Conservation Forum in India. Mr. T.R. Baalu and Mr. Babu Lal Marandi, the Honourable Union Minister of Environment and State Minister of Environment respectively, must be thanked for making time from their busy schedules to preside over the opening session of the forum. The Government of India must be lauded for its very generous contribution in assisting in the organisation of the conference.

Hearty gratitude must be given to the Secretary of Environment, Mr. Viswanath Anand, for his support and assistance and hopefully he will continue to steer the programme in India through his chairmanship of the Indian National Committee of the IUCN. Also, Mr. Sharma must be thanked for his guidance, which has been extremely useful from the Ministry.

Thanks must be registered to IUCN members, Councillors, Chairs of Commissions, and all the members of the Commissions who have helped in the planning of this event as well as the donors who have helped in the resourcing.

The Wildlife Institute of India, especially Mr. Mukherjee and Dr. B.C. Choudhury, must be acknowledged for their patience and support in organising the forum here in India. Special thanks must be recorded for Mr. Ashish Banerjee and Ritu from INTACH.

Contributions made by Mr. Sham Nagpaul and his team, the conference organisers, Gitanjali Ayer, and the communications unit who assisted with the interviews to the press deserve special acknowledgement.

The effort put together by Dr. Zakir Hussain and his team, the core conference team of IUCN and all the other wonderful IUCN staff who have as always gone well beyond the call of duty must be appreciated