

16/3. POPULATION AND THE WORLD CONSERVATION STRATEGY

RECALLING that the 14th Session of the General Assembly at Ashkhabad in 1978 considered that the time had come for IUCN to pronounce on the relationships between population growth and ecosystem conservation;

RECALLING, in particular, the consequent Resolution 15/3 adopted by the 15th General Assembly of IUCN at Christchurch in 1981 requiring IUCN to take specific actions in this field;

WELCOMING the action taken by the IUCN Council in 1983 in adopting a Position Statement on *Population and Natural Resources* which seeks to extend the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) so as to include these complex inter-relationships;

APPROVING the subsequent action of the Commission on Ecology in initiating work on a supplement to the WCS;

NOTING that sustainable development to meet present and future human needs is the basic concept of the WCS;

RECOGNIZING the challenge and opportunity created by the worldwide growing consensus on the interdependence of population, resources, environment and development, most notably in the recommendations adopted by 157 Governments at the International Conference on Population in Mexico City in August 1984, and in declarations of regional and global parliamentary groups for population and development before and after that event;

The General Assembly of IUCN, at its 16th Session in Madrid 5-14 November 1984, adopts the following as a statement of its understanding of the relationship between population and natural resources, which stems directly from the Position Statement approved by the IUCN Council in 1983:

World population doubled three times between 1650 and 1975 when it approached four billion, and is projected to double again by 2025 to over eight billion. It will increase by about 80 million in 1983 and, according to United Nations projections, this annual increase will itself keep growing until it peaks at close to 90 million.

In many countries, a tremendous demographic momentum exists because of the current youthful age structure. Actions taken today to reduce birth rates — or failure to act — will have a magnified effect decades hence. The projected increases in population are not inevitable, but significantly reducing future human numbers will require early and sustained action

Some communities have adopted ways of life that involve high levels of resource consumption. Waste is prevalent. Others, by trading manufactured goods and skills in exchange for primary products, are able to support higher numbers than their primary resources would warrant. At the other extreme, some poor communities, where numbers are increasing rapidly, can meet their basic needs only by over-exploiting their resources, sometimes with irreversible consequences. The situation is exacerbated by inequalities, problems of land tenure, misallocation of land, and lack of clear responsibility for the management of resources shared in common. Worldwide, the future demands of a rapidly growing population, especially in the developing world, and rising consumption, especially in the developed world, may together exceed human capacities to safely extract the necessary goods and services from the land and the sea.

In most countries, no serious attempt has yet been made to introduce measures for the joint management of population and resources.

Although more food is being produced than ever before, more people are malnourished than at any time in history. The reasons for this are complex. They relate to the ability of people to buy food, to unequal land holdings, to urban bias by governments and the neglect of rural development, and to unfair trading relationships. But they are also connected to rapid population growth, particularly in regions where difficult soil and climatic conditions are allied to traditional methods of farming. As a result, many countries are increasingly reliant on food imports.

Unless the present high rates of population growth are substantially reduced, it will not be possible to accomplish the goals of the World Conservation Strategy, even allowing for all foreseeable improvements in technology, distribution, organization, and land productivity.

Therefore, all nations, and the world community, should take steps to stabilize populations at levels which will permit improvements in the quality of life, in ways which do not damage biological and physical support systems.

Towards this end, the Director General is requested to:

1. TAKE INTO ACCOUNT the fundamental issues of population and resources in IUCN's own policies, programmes, resolutions and public statements, where appropriate.
2. KEEP trends in population and resources under review and report back to each General Assembly.
3. ACTIVELY PROMOTE policies designed to attain a balance between population and resources, within national conservation strategies and through field activities to preserve nature and natural resources.
4. ENCOURAGE non-governmental organizations, including local conservation groups and family planning associations to work together to spread awareness of the links between population, resources, and the environment. These bodies will also be encouraged to develop demonstration projects which link community action to conserve local ecosystems and develop wise use of natural resources with family planning programmes.
5. ENCOURAGE governments to undertake periodic assessments of population trends, natural resources, and likely economic conditions, their inter-relationships and the implications for the attainment of national goals. In doing so, governments should take account of the international impacts of population size and resource consumption.
6. ENCOURAGE governments to establish a population policy, including goals for the stabilization of population at a level that will permit sustainable management of resource and a satisfactory high quality of life for all their people.
7. ENCOURAGE governments and development agencies to take into account the special environmental problems of the urban and rural poor and to promote sustainable rural development. Conservation and family planning should be an integral part of all rural development programmes, with the total participation of the community in the planning and implementation of such programmes.
8. ENCOURAGE nations to take effective action to secure the basic right of all couples to have access to safe and effective methods of family planning, as established in the World Population Plan of Action. In making this recommendation, IUCN believes strongly that the provision of contraceptive information and services is essential for humanitarian and health reasons, quite apart from the effect on fertility levels. In facilitating the practice of responsible parenthood, it is essential that women have the right of choice about pregnancy. Such a choice is important in the stabilization of population and in improving the status of women, a prerequisite for the achievement of development and conservation goals.
9. GENERALLY ENCOURAGE national and international development policies which help create the conditions in which human population can successfully be brought into balance with carefully conserved natural resources.
10. CONSULT with its collaborators, UNEP, WWF, Unesco and FAO in preparing a supplement to the WCS in conformity with the statement hereby adopted and to determine how the recommended actions listed above are to be pursued in the implementation of the WCS at the national and international levels.

