

## 18.4 Role and Mandates of the IUCN Commissions, Standing Committees and Task Forces

RECALLING Resolution 18.1 of the present Session of the General Assembly on the Mission, Objectives and Approach of the World Conservation Union, Resolution 17.4 of the 17th Session of the General Assembly on the Governance of the Union, and Resolution 18.2 of the present Session on the Governance of the World Conservation Union;

REAFFIRMING that the Commissions are a vital component of the World Conservation Union, as:

- a. the principal mechanism through which individuals drawn from the membership and other organizations can participate actively in the work of the Union;
- b. the source of conceptual analysis, synthesis of knowledge, evaluation of priorities, proposals for action and methodology which is of particular use to the membership;

RECOGNIZING that the role of the Commissions needs to be reviewed within the wider context of re-evaluation of the mission, objectives, approach, governance and strategy of the World Conservation Union, especially with the aim of strengthening the Union's voluntary network and enhancing its participation in the overall programme;

NOTING the paper on the Role and Mandates of the Commissions, Standing Committees and Task Forces within the World Conservation Union, prepared for the 18th Session of the General Assembly by the Director General in consultation with the Commission Chairs and the Council;

FURTHER NOTING the amended mandates of the Commissions as approved by the 18th Session of the General Assembly;

The General Assembly of IUCN—The World Conservation Union, at its 18th Session in Perth, Australia, 28 November-5 December 1990:

1. ENDORSES nine basic conditions that need to be met if Commissions are to be effective, namely:
  - a. the need for Commissions to have a clear focus; to relate to a distinct constituency of users of their products, and to have a clear idea of what they are trying to achieve. The mission and objectives of each Commission must be

supported wholeheartedly by the entire community that comprises its members;

- b. the need for Commissions to be broadly based and to avoid factions. Members who have genuine differences of opinion on certain issues should be able to work together under a Commission umbrella on the points on which they agree, and agree to differ on the rest. Commissions should therefore be managed to ensure that interest groups feel neither discriminated against nor more important than others, as a matter of principle;
- c. recognition that good Commission management is concerned with promoting healthy and appropriate activity. In running a voluntary network, there is inevitably a risk of certain elements running off on their own, or causing embarrassment in other ways. However, if these risks are avoided through excessive centralized control, the chief victim is always the many good and useful activities being carried out by Commission members. Control-minded management kills voluntary networks;
- d. the need for Commissions to produce products which meet a genuine need. Accordingly, their activities must be related to those institutions and governments that can do something about the problems they address. The outputs of a Commission must not only be useful and needed, but also designed to generate the maximum "on-the-ground" conservation activity. Commissions are emphatically not self-serving networks; rather they should be one of the principal services that IUCN provides for its members, and the members need to know what services they can obtain from each Commission. Neither should Commissions be ivory-tower think-tanks.

The intellectual work of IUCN Commissions should be

oriented towards the achievement of practical conservation action. However, the scientific activities involved should be of the highest possible calibre in order to contribute most effectively to such conservation action.

- e. acceptance that Commission leadership (especially by the Chair and Steering Committee) must provide a clear vision and intellectual lead to the members. Commissions should be led by encouragement and example. The Chair and Steering Committee should keep one step ahead of the issues and ensure that the Commission provides leadership within its field. They should also ensure that the Commission constantly reviews its performance and activities in relation to global conservation needs;
- f. recognition that Commissions can only be effective if the members are encouraged in their work, and feel that what they are doing is having a beneficial impact on conservation problems. Good Commission operation is helped, *inter alia*, by: ensuring that the right people are in the right positions within the Commission (all sorts of different talents are needed to run a Commission well and good management can identify these talents and

- make best use of them); ensuring that there are good communication channels within the Commission (members need to know whom they should contact on which issues); ensuring that Commission members have the names, addresses and telephone/telefax numbers of all other members; ensuring that members are fully informed of major activities within the Commission, and how their own work is contributing to the whole (Commission news letters are especially important in this regard); and providing a means for Commission members to understand how their work relates to that of IUCN as a whole (resources permitting, all Commission members should receive the *IUCN Bulletin* free; this is not currently the case);
- g. understanding that Commissions are not temporary networks, but rather address issues of permanent concern to the conservation community. They are established by the General Assembly and continue until a subsequent General Assembly decides, normally on the proposal of the Council, to abolish them, subdivide them or alter their objectives. The membership, however, currently lapses at each General Assembly, and this has resulted in a hiatus of some months while new nominations by the Chairs are considered by the Council. New Regulations have therefore been adopted by the Council which eliminate this discontinuity and the inefficiency and low morale to which it has given rise in the past;
  - h. the need for the structure of each Commission to be designed to ensure effective operation within its sphere of action, and for effective linkages between Commissions so as to ensure that their activities are mutually reinforcing;
    - i. recognition that members of the Secretariat assigned by the Director General to work with a Commission, and any staff recruited by Chairs to assist them in their work, serve primarily as "enablers and equippers", encouraging the development and guiding the direction of the network, and attempting to bring the best out of the membership. It is important for such staff members to have professional qualifications relevant to the work of the Commission, but they must accept that they should act as programme coordinators, achieving professional outputs through harnessing their networks. The number of staff needed increases in proportion to the scale and intensity of Commission activity;
2. REQUESTS the Council to bear these criteria in mind when reviewing the mandates of Commissions in future;
  3. CONSIDERS all Commissions, Standing Committees and Task Forces as constituting components of IUCN's "World Conservation College";
  4. DECIDES that during the 1991-1993 triennium six *Commissions* will be retained by IUCN, namely:
    - a. Species Survival Commission;
    - b. Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas;
    - c. Commission on Environmental Law;
    - d. Commission on Ecology;
    - e. Commission on Environmental Strategy and Planning;
    - f. Commission on Education and Communication;
  5. REQUESTS the Council to establish a procedure for a mid-term and end-of-term formal independent evaluation of the performance of each Commission by a team of two well-regarded experts in the field of conservation and a professional in the field of performance audit, with a view to identifying any necessary improvement in Commission relevance and performance; and that the Council review the role, structure, mandate and operation of all Commissions for the next triennium prior to each General Assembly, based on these evaluations;
  6. ENCOURAGES the Council and Director General to consider, having regard to available resources, establishing an Inter-Commission Standing Committee on the Conservation of Biological Diversity, a Standing Committee on the Environmental Implications of Global Change, and Advisory Committees on Population and Resources and the Role of Women in Natural Resources Management.

