

1.12 Conservation Action in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

RECOGNIZING that the vast territory of the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) occupies more than one sixth of the Earth's land surface, with tremendous diversity of biological, cultural, social and economic conditions;

AWARE OF the geopolitical realignments that have taken place in Europe, and the global significance of the challenges facing the region, and especially the CIS, as it goes through a period of transition from central control to market economics;

RECOGNIZING the direct impact of this transition on natural resources including forests, wetlands, grasslands, deserts, coastal, marine and mountain ecosystems, and the unique opportunities that these changes provide for influencing conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of natural resources, *inter alia* in the States of the CIS;

BEARING IN MIND that the countries of the region have experienced a long period of environmental abuse and this makes the environment a very strong priority in regional policy;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the established professional networks working actively throughout the conservation community of North Eurasia, and long-established traditions of cooperation between governments, academia and NGO communities in these countries;

CONCERNED that IUCN membership in North Eurasia is one of the lowest in the world, and that at present there are too few incentives and opportunities for active expansion of membership;

ALSO CONCERNED that there is only one IUCN office with only one staff person, and that this is drastically insufficient in countries of the CIS, which is a large part of the IUCN East Europe Region;

CONSIDERING THAT it is very timely and indeed essential to develop new IUCN coordination mechanisms in North Eurasia and to build organizational capacity there;

RECALLING the paramount importance of the decisions of the third Pan-European Ministerial "Environment for Europe" Conference (Sofia, 1995) for the development of IUCN activities in the States of the CIS and also the recommendation of the independent review of the European Programme for enhanced IUCN action in CIS;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the Russian Federation has clearly assumed a substantial commitment to supporting activities of IUCN as the only State member of IUCN in the CIS, and is willing to work closely with the IUCN European Regional Office;

NOTING that Russian is an essential language for practitioners in environmental topics in the CIS because it is widely used in the region and in professional environmental circles of some countries in other regions;

ALSO NOTING that Central Asia is an extremely important and often overlooked region and is a party to principal Pan-European environmental initiatives, and that integration of this region into the IUCN European Programme activities is a high priority;

ACKNOWLEDGING the successful experience of the IUCN East European and subsequently European Programme as it relates to the CIS;

WELCOMING the elaboration of a Russia sub-programme in the work plan of the IUCN European Regional Office for 1996;

CONSIDERING it necessary to develop a Central Asia sub-programme and a Caucasus sub-programme, so that there would be all necessary components for a coherent European and Northern Eurasian Programme of IUCN;

CONVINCED that IUCN, its Commissions, programmes and networks will be able to make a major contribution to the development of cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organizations and conservation experts in Northern Eurasia;

RECALLING the endorsement of the process of decentralization of IUCN activities in Resolution 19.1 of the 19th Session of the General Assembly;

The World Conservation Congress at its 1st Session in Montreal, Canada, 14–23 October 1996:

REQUESTS the Director General, within available resources, to ensure through adequate financial and staffing allocations an appropriate IUCN presence in the CIS region, and as components of this initiative:

- a) to support further development and design with the European Programme of sub-regional programmes for Central/East Europe, the Caucasus, Russia and Central Asia, together with a North Eurasia Action Plan for Protected Areas;
- b) to direct the European Regional Office to pay particular attention to the need to expand the membership base in the countries of North Eurasia;
- c) to request the European Regional Office and other IUCN components to design and implement programmes (including Secretariat sub-programmes and projects and Commission programmes) with the involvement of members from the whole region, and to stimulate participation of IUCN members in the CIS in global and regional programmes and activities, notably the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy;
- d) to encourage and support the formation and operation of National Committees and of a North Eurasian Sub-regional Working Group, involving IUCN members active in the region, and to support other mechanisms to unite members, in order *inter alia* to improve coordination between them, assist the formulation of common priorities and encourage recruitment of new members;
- e) to provide the necessary capacity to use Russian and English languages as most convenient for communication throughout the CIS, and in particular to seek through the European Regional Programme to make relevant IUCN documents available in Russian as well as relevant Russian documents available in English, French and Spanish, and to provide adequate support for the dissemination of relevant IUCN materials to conservation professionals throughout the region.

Note. This Resolution was adopted by consensus. The delegation of the State member Germany indicated that it had not participated in discussion of the Resolution nor would it have participated in any voting. The delegations of the State members Norway and Sweden indicated that had there been a vote they would have abstained.