

2.8 IUCN's work in Oceania

RECOGNIZING that the natural values and cultural character of Oceania were shaped over time in many small islands in a vast expanse of ocean, remote from major population and economic centres;

ALSO RECOGNIZING that conserving these values poses particular challenges because of the remoteness, low population, and small economic base of Oceania;

CONCERNED that the small physical size and limited extent of island habitats make them extremely vulnerable to large-scale extractive industries, notably mining, forestry and plantation agriculture, that have expanded significantly in the past decade;

AWARE that the scattered archipelagoes include a wide range of island types which have very high levels of endemism in terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems and that these levels of endemism mean that the biological diversity of Oceania has global significance;

ALSO AWARE that Oceania's extensive marine environments include highly diverse tropical communities of coral reefs and associated ecosystems and a large number of seamounts which are, as yet, largely undescribed;

CONCERNED that a significant proportion of Oceania's terrestrial, coastal, and marine flora and fauna is threatened, especially by human overexploitation, habitat degradation, introduction of alien invasive species, and climate change;

ALSO CONCERNED that regional threats to marine biological diversity and small island ecosystems are of special significance as Oceania includes a significant proportion of the world's ocean area and small islands;

WELCOMING the specific identification in IUCN's Overall Programme, of efforts to manage invasive species, as these have a particularly serious impact on the ecosystems and endemic species of Oceania;

NOTING that IUCN does not have any regional office or country office presence in Oceania, and that previous IUCN programmes have overlooked the need for a specific focus in Oceania; and

FURTHER NOTING that a regional meeting of IUCN members held in Australia (10–12 March 2000) expressed concerns over the low level of involvement by the Secretariat with Oceania issues;

The World Conservation Congress at its 2nd Session in Amman, Jordan, 4–11 October 2000:

1. RECOGNIZES the significance of Oceania as an area of high biological diversity and low economic base, vulnerable therefore to a range of human-induced threats, which has not to date been adequately recognized in previous IUCN Programmes between General Assemblies and Congresses;

2. REQUESTS the Director General to:

- (a) carry out a review of the regional balance of the Secretariat's Component Programmes in relation to IUCN's Overall Programme until the next Session of the World Conservation Congress, taking account of, among other issues:
 - (i) identification of areas with high biodiversity values;
 - (ii) assessment of the level of threats they face; and
 - (iii) identification of those areas or issues that could substantially benefit from the input of Union expertise;
- (b) include in the review the urgent priority of funding and appointing regional coordinators, as a minimum, in those areas that are identified as needing them;
- (c) as a priority, take the steps necessary to correct important gaps and imbalances that are identified; and
- (d) work with the IUCN Oceania Regional Committee to ensure that the work plan to implement the Secretariat's Component Programmes takes full account of the need to more fully integrate Oceania into the work of the Union.