

4.062 Enhancing ecological networks and connectivity conservation areas

NOTING that most biodiversity is today affected by human activities, and that according to the *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment* "... over the past 50 years humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any comparable period of time in human history", as a result of which more than 60% of ecosystem services are degraded;

RECALLING that healthy ecosystems provide a multitude of ecological services to humanity and that as such they represent its "life insurance" and the world's largest development agency;

APPROVING of the Ecosystem Approach developed within the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD);

RECOGNIZING the indispensable contribution of protected areas, which today cover close to 12% of emerged land areas, to the conservation of life on Earth;

FURTHER RECALLING that the 7th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP7) adopted a *Programme of Work on Protected Areas*, the overall objective of which was to establish and maintain "... comprehensive, effectively managed and ecologically representative systems of protected areas..." that collectively, will significantly reduce the rate of loss of global biodiversity;

NOTING however that there is a limit to the area which can be set aside as protected areas, and that those areas reserved have geographically fixed, legally defined boundaries;

ALSO RECOGNIZING that the majority of the world's biodiversity is found outside protected areas and that the latter will not be able to fulfil their protective role without taking into account the biodiversity found within a larger area;

HIGHLIGHTING the vital role that ecological networks could play in the conservation of biodiversity in the face of alterations caused by changes to climate, through, for example, improving the resilience of ecosystems and the dispersion of species;

ENCOURAGED by initiatives for the implementation of networks of protected areas, and initiatives aimed at establishing ecological networks such as the Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN) and the Natura 2000 network in Europe; Yellowstone to Yukon and boreal conservation efforts in North America, including the Canadian Boreal Initiative; the 'Alps to Atherton'; Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and 'Gondwana Link' in Australia; the Terai Arc in Nepal and India; the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor; the Vilacamba-Amboró in South America and many others;

RECALLING that Recommendation 1.38 *Ecological Networks and Corridors of Natural and Semi-Natural Areas* adopted by the 1st IUCN World Conservation Congress (Montreal, 1996) called on:

- (a) IUCN members to "further the development of ecological networks at national, regional and intercontinental levels as a means of strengthening the integrity and resilience of the world's biological diversity"; and
- (b) the Director General "to review experience in developing and applying ecological networks" and to "promote co-operation in the further development of ecological networks" especially at transboundary sites;

RECALLING the CBD *Programme of Work* target that, by 2015, "all protected area systems are integrated into the wider landscape and seascape, and relevant sectors, by applying the ecosystem approach and taking into account ecological connectivity and the concept, where appropriate, of ecological networks";

NOTING that connectivity conservation and ecological networks are a strategic part of landscape and seascape integration of protected areas;

RECOGNIZING that infrastructure built by humans can be a major obstacle to ecological connectivity;

CONVINCED that the loss of connectivity in wildlife corridors leads to ecosystems becoming less resilient and to irreparable losses that have an effect on human welfare and safety;

NOTING that IUCN has a World Conservation Learning Network (WCLN), and that the WCLN Institute was created to offer courses to improve decision making in subjects of high priority to the Union;

RECOGNIZING the critical importance of people in connectivity conservation areas, their values, rights, needs and aspirations, and the need for them to be part of an integrated approach to connectivity conservation areas as part of ecological networks and to enable them to share in the benefits of protecting connectivity;

NOTING the urgency of action required to help retain these natural, interconnected lands and seas due to the pressures of global change, and in particular, the growth in the world's population from 6.7 billion in 2008 to 9.2 billion people by 2050;

NOTING FURTHER that the new carbon economy provides an opportunity for carbon storage and carbon sequestration in ecological networks including protected areas and connectivity conservation areas, and in particular, in high biodiversity conservation value sites; and

RECOGNIZING the value of terrestrial connectivity conservation areas for the future supply of reliable quantities of high-quality water;

The World Conservation Congress at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5-14 October 2008:

1. REQUESTS states to establish national ecological networks and connectivity conservation areas to strengthen the protection of biodiversity, which include, as appropriate, biological corridors and buffer zones around protected areas; and
2. CALLS ON states to strengthen the integration of biodiversity and ecological connectivity in terrestrial and marine planning, including conservation planning and especially actions on climate change mitigation and adaptation;

In addition, the World Conservation Congress, at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5-14 October 2008, provides the following guidance concerning implementation of the IUCN Programme 2009-2012:

3. REQUESTS the Director General, in close collaboration with IUCN's Commissions, members and partners, to ensure that IUCN plays an active role in facilitating the establishment of ecological networks and connectivity conservation areas by:
 - (a) undertaking and encouraging work on ecological networks, by promoting exchanges between IUCN partners and members, by elaborating and disseminating relevant examples of policies, plans, methods and tools, by promoting the development of ecological networks in local, national, regional and international policies, and by supporting transboundary cooperation (including across the high seas);
 - (b) developing wider awareness of the need for and establishment of ecological networks as a critical national and international adaptation and mitigation response to climate change;
 - (c) enhancing the recognition of the role played by ecosystems, the ecological services they provide and the contributions they make to development and land-use policies;
 - (d) examining more closely the case of ecological connectivity in marine environments;
 - (e) achieving a Union-wide (One Programme) approach to connectivity conservation areas in recognition of the interdisciplinary nature of the responses needed and the benefits of the IUCN Secretariat, Commissions, members and partners working together;
 - (f) developing further guidelines and best practice concerning ecological networks, including advice about conception, governance mechanisms and monitoring of ecological networks, as well as their integration in policies both public and private;

- (g) determining, in collaboration with national governments and NGOs, a priority list of strategic connectivity conservation areas that can help:
 - (i) sustain the natural values of protected areas, World Heritage sites, Biosphere Reserves, Geoparks, Ramsar sites and others;
 - (ii) conserve species of the world; and (iii) for terrestrial areas, retain natural water catchments of critical importance to people; and
 - (h) investigating mechanisms for funding ecological networks and especially connectivity conservation areas and protected areas through the new carbon economy, the water economy, and through national or other government or philanthropic investments; and
4. ASKS the Director General and the IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (CEC) to offer training courses and professional development programmes that describe the benefits and the costs of ecological networks and connectivity that:
- (a) include conservation and sustainable development issues, based on experiences (which have led to a real economic assessment where the cost-benefit ratio due to biodiversity loss was high); and
 - (b) present different options compatible with the maintenance of ecological networks and connectivity.