WCC-2012-Res-089-EN
Dams and hydraulic infrastructure

RECALLING that IUCN (then known as the World Conservation Union), together with the World Bank, helped to establish the World Commission on Dams (WCD) in May 1998 in response to the escalating local and international controversies over large dams;

RECALLING that Resolutions 2.*19 Responding to the recommendations from the World Commission on Dams* and 3.087 *Financial institutions and the World Commission on Dams recommendations*) adopted by the 2nd and 3rd IUCN World Conservation Congresses (Amman, 2000 and Bangkok, 2004, respectively) took note of the global review of large dams conducted by the World Commission on Dams (WCD), and recommended comprehensive assessments of major dam projects to balance environmental, social and economic needs in line with the seven strategic priorities[1] published by the WCD in 2000;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the WCD continues to be a reference point, but that WCD recommendations are not accepted by all actors; and recognizing other sets of internationally published policies produced by different parties to the dams debate with particular purposes or constituencies in mind, particularly: (i) the Safeguard Policies of the World Bank; (ii) the Performance Standards of the International Finance Corporation; (iii) the Equator Principles; (iv) the Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol; and (v) the Rapid Basin-wide Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Tool; and looking to convene actors to construct further steps taken in common which constitute good practice and build on elements of the priorities of the WCD;

RECALLING that the existing IUCN policy on dams is established by preceding Resolutions of the IUCN General Assembly and sessions of the World Conservation Congress, specifically: Resolutions 19.28 *Environmental Impact Assessment* and 19.29 *Dam construction, irrigation and water diversions* (adopted in Buenos Aires,1994); Resolution 1.98 *Environmentally sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin* (Montreal, 1996); Resolutions 2.19 *Responding to the recommendations from the World Commission on Dams*, 2.34 *Multilateral and bilateral financial institutions and projects impacting on biodiversity and natural features* and 2.58 *Ecological management issues relating to large dams* (Amman, 2000); Resolutions 3.061 *IUCN's interaction with the private sector*, 3.087 *Financial institutions and the World Commission on Dams recommendations* and 3.110 *Promoting responsible management of water resources in the Mekong Region* (Bangkok, 2004); and Resolutions 4.052 *Implementing the United Nations* Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 4.087 *Impacts of infrastructure and extractive industries on protected areas*, and 4.091 *Strategic environmental assessment of public policies, plans and programmes as an instrument for conserving biodiversity* (Barcelona, 2008);

AWARE of the need to consolidate and increase water storage capacity in the face of intensifying variations in water availability as a result of climate change, that demands for water and energy due to demographic growth and economic development are putting increasing pressure on available water resources with knock-on impacts on biodiversity, that interest in hydropower as a replacement for fossil fuels has increased considerably, and underscoring the importance of advancing sustainability in design, construction and operation of dams and management of reservoirs for generation of hydropower, irrigation, water storage, fisheries and other uses essential for local communities;

[1] 1) Gaining Public Acceptance, 2) Comprehensive Options Assessment, 3) Addressing Existing Dams, 4) Sustaining Rivers and Livelihoods, 5) Recognizing Entitlements and Sharing Benefits, 6) Ensuring Compliance, 7) Sharing Rivers for Peace, Development and Security.

ACUTELY AWARE of the consequences and potential conflicts in disrupted lives/livelihoods and damaged environments where lesser standards of diligence and performance take effect, including failure to take adequate measures to follow the hierarchical process to avoid, mitigate or compensate for negative impacts; and highlighting the urgency of efforts to eliminate such lesser standards from dam and hydraulic infrastructure projects where the option to avoid built infrastructure does not exist;

COGNIZANT of evolving financial flows to developing countries, including funding alternatives to overseas development assistance from OECD countries (sovereign funds, funding from non-OECD countries as grants and loans, and finance from other sources including carbon-offsets) which offer significant opportunities for funding infrastructure projects;

CONSCIOUS of the constant need to promote participatory decision-making processes which identify water management options and infrastructure alternatives that avoid negative impacts on river and wetland ecosystems and on the livelihoods of affected populations, including support to processes where affected indigenous peoples can express their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any water infrastructure project affecting their lands or territories and other resources and which ensure that, where such impacts cannot be avoided, measures to mitigate or compensate for negative project impacts are adopted, in-line with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Akwé: Kon Voluntary Guidelines;

RECALLING the natural storage functions of groundwater, as well as wetlands and surface waters – each components of the natural infrastructure of river basins, alongside built infrastructure alternatives (dams, reservoirs, irrigation systems, levees and canals);

UNDERLINING that the functioning of built as well as natural water infrastructure relies on ecosystem services, as do the livelihoods of societies and peoples, especially the poor, and that key industry sectors and governments are often not fully aware of options for investment in management and development of water resources that rely on natural infrastructure;

RECOGNIZING that good practice can afford project-affected populations with viable alternatives to existing livelihoods, based on measures protecting ecosystems and species that may improve local populations' development prospects, provided that no relocation related to water infrastructure projects shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the peoples concerned and following agreement regarding just and fair compensation, and that appropriate measures should be put in place to mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual impacts arising from water infrastructure projects;

ADOPTING, from environmental management and sustainability assessment initiatives, and adapting as appropriate, the concept of 'continuous improvement' whereby lessons from past or current practices are incorporated into future development as part of a sustained and systematic process of learning, to help achieve progressive advances in sustainability performance of dam and hydraulic infrastructure projects;

CONSCIOUS of the value of assessment tools and protocols in bringing together different actors in dialogue around dam and hydraulic infrastructure projects, and acknowledging the body of internationally published policies now available, which offer alternative sets of standards on which systems for monitoring improvements in the sustainability performance of dams and infrastructure may be based, encompassing environmental and social, as well as technical and financial criteria;

IDENTIFYING as a common step which may be taken by States, industry, civil society and other actors, and where the option to avoid construction is impossible, endorsement of the

concept of continuous improvement and its application to site identification, planning, design, construction and operation of dams and hydraulic infrastructure, and supporting them in their efforts to attain good standards in dam and infrastructure siting, design, construction and operation; and

REAFFIRMING IUCN's role of mobilizing its membership, convening and empowering stakeholders, building partnerships, creating and providing knowledge and analysis, fostering innovation, supporting advocacy for increased equity in the use of natural resources and ecosystem services, and working to advance nature-based solutions;

The World Conservation Congress, at its session in Jeju, Republic of Korea, 6–15 September 2012:

1. CALLS ON governments of all States, including (but not limited to) State Members of the Union, to commit to promoting and supporting the concept of 'continuous improvement' so as to maintain advancement in sustainability policy and practice applying to large dam and hydraulic infrastructure projects, whether projects in their own territory or in the territory of another State or States (where, for example, a government is contributing finance or other support to dams or hydraulic infrastructure projects in that/those other jurisdictions) by:

    a. choosing an international policy: by identifying the policy on the basis of which improvements in sustainability performance will be assessed, being an internationally-published and recognized policy, and by publicly declaring adherence to the objectives and operational principles, and requirements of the chosen international policy around existing or proposed dam and hydraulic infrastructure projects;

    b. defining a process for monitoring: by determining or defining the process – including catchment, regional, national, or international planning processes – which is to be applied in order to assess and monitor sustainability performance and to monitor direct and indirect impacts, such as applying a basin-wide understanding and approach, using an independent observer where possible;

    c. identifying responsible institutions: by identifying the institutions (national, regional and international) responsible for implementing and overseeing the assessment and monitoring process, as well as the procedures and principles for ensuring transparency, accountability and participation (and, to those ends, measures to strengthen institutional capacity, where appropriate);

    d. using legal and comprehensive concession agreements (such as contracts or licenses), which will be made public, and which will cover the respective responsibilities and obligations of the parties involved in dam-building projects, not least in respect of social (resettlement, livelihood development of the resettlers, etc.) and environmental (water quality issues in reservoirs and downstream, fisheries impacts, climate change implications of greenhouse gas production etc.) requirements;

    e. determining/declaring a means of benchmarking continuous improvement: by determining and publicly identifying the screening, scoring/rating, benchmarking or other methods or frameworks for assessment, including measures in line with the chosen policy to protect particular categories of habitat or populations;

    f. establishing open reporting for disclosure of conclusions of assessments: by establishing and operating regular reporting of the sustainability performance

assessment and monitoring process, conducted in a transparent, accountable and participatory manner, including publishing the reports and making disclosure of the findings, conclusions and recommendations from the assessments to promptly put them into the public domain; and

g. collaborating with neighbouring and basin States: by working in collaboration with other neighbouring and basin States as well as international river basin agencies;

2. INVITES industry, supported by public and private financing institutions, to commit to continuous improvement in sustainability policy and practice of large dam and hydraulic infrastructure projects by carrying out assessment processes, adopting monitoring, screening, scoring/rating or other methods or frameworks for assessment and benchmarking, based on an internationally published policy and reflecting those in key performance indicators in plans and reports;

3. RECOMMENDS that civil society organizations and other actors support sustained and systematic processes of lesson-learning from large dam and hydraulic infrastructure practice, in a solutions-oriented approach, to achieve continuous improvements in sustainability performance, for the needs and benefit of all actors, including indigenous peoples and local communities, with particular attention to the most vulnerable groups and to gender equity, as well as acting as independent observers of the assessment methods, and monitoring and reporting processes conducted by States, industry and financial institutions, including the transparency, accountability and participation aspects of those methods and processes; and

4. RESOLVES that IUCN, through its Members, Commissions and Secretariat, actively promotes and supports such improvements in sustainability policy and practice by States, industry and financial institutions, by:

   a. acting as an independent and neutral convener of actors at global, regional and national levels to support and promote the concept of continuous improvement in large dams and hydraulic infrastructure sustainability policy and practice;

   b. compiling and bringing to bear, including by a review and updating of the World Commission on Dams Report, using a participatory approach, knowledge to contribute to the putting into place by States, industry and financial institutions, of the sustainability performance assessment, monitoring and reporting processes, including advising, as appropriate, on assessment frameworks, screening and scoring/rating methods, information exchange and appraisal, monitoring and reporting tools;

   c. mobilizing IUCN Members and Commissions with identified and credible experience in the provision of technical support and advice where requested and actively seek invitations to join formal processes around dam and hydraulic infrastructure options, including identifying entry points to engage in regional to national policy work on water and dams in river basins;

   d. coordinating actions at basin/local level for testing nature-based solutions to sustainability challenges relating to large dams and hydraulic infrastructure projects, including credible non-dam options, and where required focus on local development around reservoirs, e.g. through secured access to land, rules for sustainable natural resource management and fair access to benefits created;

e. strengthening the capacity of responsible institutions in developing countries (in support of the implementation of this Resolution), including within the Union on EIA/SEA processes and procedures; and

f. contributing, during the implementation of the above assessment, monitoring and reporting processes, to continuous learning, dissemination and communicating results and impacts through multi-stakeholder dialogue.

The State Member Turkey provided the following statement for the record:

“The Republic of Turkey objects to any references made to the report of the World Commission on Dams”.

State and agency Members of the United States abstained during the vote on this Motion for reasons given in the US General Statement on the IUCN Resolutions Process.