

WCC-2020-Res-134-EN

Protecting the Lower Congo River from large hydro-electric dam developments

AWARE that the World Commission on Dams (WCD) (2000) provided seven strategic priorities and related policy principles for future development of dams that include: gaining public acceptance, comprehensive options assessment, sustaining rivers and livelihoods;

NOTING the poor implementation of the WCD recommendations, with almost 500 million river-dependent people potentially impacted by large dams, the need for more comprehensive assessments of dam costs and benefits, and the social inequities between dam beneficiaries and those disadvantaged by dams;

NOTING that large dams have already displaced ca. 80 million people and compromised the livelihoods of 472 million more;

RECOGNISING that Resolution 5.089 *Dams and hydraulic infrastructure* (Jeju, 2012) called for IUCN Members and Commissions to provide advice on plans for hydraulic infrastructure options and to join formal processes around dam and hydraulic infrastructure options;

ALARMED that large hydropower schemes continue to be proposed as 'green' or 'clean' energy, despite aforementioned studies showing that their benefits are far outweighed by their negative impacts on the environment, people and climate;

RECOGNISING that hydropower can bring significant environmental load in terms of aquatic and riparian ecosystem and species loss, as well as loss of livelihoods dependent on those resources;

NOTING that a recent call (*Rivers for Recovery*, 2020) recommends upgrades to existing hydropower projects to increase efficiency instead of building new dams, and development of green infrastructure that protects and restores freshwater ecosystems, biodiversity and livelihoods;

NOTING a new example of hydropower development (Inga 3, Grand Inga - Inga 4-8, Pioka and Matadi) that could substantially impact one of the world's largest river catchments, in the region of the Lower Congo;

RECOGNISING that legal, socially beneficial and responsibly operated activities such as the construction of large infrastructure can nonetheless cause, or are likely to cause, severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment;

ALARMED that development could be detrimental to the Lower Congo's rich freshwater biodiversity, displace ca. 6,300 people (*International Rivers*, 2014) and disturb the ecology of the marine Congo canyon; and

CONCERNED that the development plans for the Congo could bypass procedures to ensure that projects are awarded transparently and via competitive bidding (CORAP, 2021);

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, at its session in Marseille, France:

1. CALLS ON Commissions and Members to review the recommendations of the WCD and other more recent documents and synthesise this into a contemporary set of recommendations for good practice;
2. CALLS on the Director General to send a memo to the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo encouraging him to:
 - a. support protection and restoration of Lower Congo ecosystems;
 - b. balance development by enacting legal protections and governance for the Lower Congo; and

c. ensure that all contracts involving major infrastructure projects impacting the Lower Congo include a provision for local stakeholders to be included in planning, and have their concerns incorporated into further discussions, according to Resolution 7.008 *Protecting rivers and their associated ecosystems as corridors in a changing climate* (Marseille, 2020), and require all investors to adhere to the performance standards of the International Finance Corporation; and

3. ASKS the Species Survival Commission (SSC) to send a memo to the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo urgently informing him on the potential threats to the ecosystems of the Lower Congo that could be caused by the development plans for the dams.