Enhancing the engagement of IUCN-Med with councillors and commissions

Malaga, 28-29 January

On 28 and 29 January, a meeting was held by the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation with the aim of “enhancing the engagement of IUCN-Med with councillors and commissions”. The meeting, which took place at the Civic Centre in Malaga, was opened by the Regional Minister for the Environment of the Andalusian Government, Cinta Castillo, Miguel Aymerich, Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs (MARM), a representative of the provincial Council and a representative of Malaga City Council.

In her opening speech, the Minister stressed that the Andalusian government and IUCN share “similar environmental worries and problems in the Mediterranean framework”, and furthermore she highlighted the fight against climate change, the protection of flora and fauna, habitat conservation and the fight against forest fires as some of the common objectives for their actions. Cinta Castillo took advantage of this occasion to launch the book written by IUCN experts: “Mediterranean Mosaic”, which talks about the vast biodiversity of the Mediterranean and examines its greatest environmental threats, such as desertification, over-fishing and the lack of water resources.

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More than 20 IUCN members, experts and staff, took part in the meeting to discuss the different resolutions applicable to the various topics and likewise the best way of putting them into practice.

A tracking system was also presented to ensure better participation and transparency during the process of implementing the resolutions. Furthermore, possible improvements which could be made when it comes to working with commissions, members, and councillors as well as national and regional committees were discussed and analysed during these sessions.

At this meeting, the expected role of IUCN-Med, in the implementation of resolutions through proposals such as establishing a regional forum for oceans, coasts and islands was discussed, as well as, promoting new tools for facilitating the designation and management of marine protected areas; and identifying important Mediterranean sites based on the criteria promoted by the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Finally, the need for the offices in Amman, Brussels and Malaga to coordinate their efforts was also highlighted so that complementary work can be carried out and programmes and resolutions synchronized, these being just some of the objectives.

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Link: Consejería de Medio Ambiente

Strong ties ensure the future of IUCN-Med

On 27 January, the Monitoring Comittee meeting for the Centre’s Memorandum of Understanding took place and it was attended by the Andalusian Regional Government, the Spanish Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs, and the Spanish International Cooperation Agency for Development (AECID).

During the meeting information was provided about the 20th Anniversary of the Law on Protected Natural Areas in Andalucía which is to be celebrated in 2009, and the possibility of proposing Andalucia as a candidate to host the next World Parks Congress in 2013. Furthermore, various events were put forward for the coming year, coinciding with the Spanish presidency of the EU and the meetings of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010; and Barcelona was also mentioned as it has just been selected as host of the Secretariat for the “Union for the Mediterranean”.

During the meeting, participants were informed about progress made in 2008, the Centre’s economic and financial situation, and the IUCN-Med activities planned for the coming years. Representatives from the Spanish institutions present at the meeting expressed great satisfaction with the work being carried out by IUCN-Med for the conservation of nature in the Mediterranean area.

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Links: Junta de Andalucía - Spanish Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs - Spanish International Cooperation Agency for Development
IUCN-Med’s first official visit to Algeria

The Environment Minister of Algeria asks for technical support for his country

As a follow up to agreements reached during the IUCN Congress held in Barcelona in October 2008, Margarita Astrálag, Director of IUCN-Med, Rami Salman, Head of Programme, and Pedro Regato, Senior Programme Manager for Ecosystem Management and Development, made their first official visit to Algeria. The main objective of this trip was to identify priorities and possible future initiatives in the Maghreb country, as well as to meet with Algerian IUCN members, explore the possibility of increasing the number of members, and study common initiatives.

During the visit, meetings were held with all IUCN members in the country, many institutions, as well as independent experts who suggested sharing experiences with the Union and promoting joint work in different environmental fields (forests, the artisanal fishing industry, steppe ecosystems and drylands, amongst others).

The Algerian Environment Minister, Mr Rahmani, offered a warm welcome to the IUCN-Med team and asked for their help in the management and conservation of Tinerkook, a dryland in the southwest of the country, and a coastal area near to Jijel, to the east of Algiers.

As a result of this meeting, IUCN-Med will carry out a field mission in May 2009 in order to begin the evaluation and preparation of future activities in the country.

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Tunisia holds a workshop on the “GIS applied to freshwater biodiversity assessment”

From 19 to 23 January, the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation held a regional workshop in the city of Hammamet (Tunisia) regarding the “Geographical Information System (GiS) applied to freshwater biodiversity assessment”.

These work sessions enabled the 32 water-resource managers and environmental planners from the five North African countries to incorporate spatial information on freshwater biodiversity, particularly information coming from Red List assessments (distribution of threatened species), into their planning activities and development processes.

In addition, the workshop allowed the network of regional experts to develop further and likewise to share existing information between experts and decision makers.

Given the participation and the feedback received, the meeting held by the ‘International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC)’ , together with experts from IUCN-Med, turned out to be a great success.

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IUCN-Med signs an agreement in Morocco for managing Al Hoceima National Park

The High Commissioner for Water, Forests and Combating Desertification, Dr. Adeladim Lhafi, and Director of the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, Margarita Astrálaga, have signed an agreement for the conservation and development of Al Hoceima National Park.

The agreement, which was formalized on 30 January in the Moroccan city of Rabat, has the support and financial backing of the Organismo Autónomo de Parques Nacionales (OAPN) of the Spanish Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs.

The project aims to consolidate actions for habitat and species conservation; organize and specify recreational and educational uses of the park; organize and analyse the park’s eco-touristic value; as well as support the sustainable development of local people.

The work of IUCN-Med in this initiative involves the execution and integrated financial management of the project activities.

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Links:
- Spanish Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs
- Organismo Autónomo de Parques Nacionales (OAPN)
- High Commission for Water, Forests and Combating Desertification (HCEFLCD)

New environmental opportunities for Libya

Between 16 and 21 February 2009, the Director General of the Libyan Environment General Authority (EGA), Mr. ElFallah, invited IUCN to two meetings held in Tripoli.

The first meeting, which took place from 16 to 20 February, was devoted to discussions with all relevant ministerial departments and EGA partners in order to identify the needs and activities which could be funded in Libya. For this reason, the creation of an Environmental Protection Fund is being discussed for which financial support would come from private companies operating in the country.

In addition to this, on 21 February, a coordination meeting was held between EGA, the UNDP Office in Libya, RAC/SPA (Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas), the WWF Mediterranean Project Office and the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation. During the meeting, each partner indicated its present and proposed activities and the discussion then continued more specifically regarding the implementation of the recently approved project from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the Strategic Partnership for the Large Marine Ecosystems of the Mediterranean. The meeting identified many options for cooperation and coordination, as well as new opportunities to be considered given the current needs of the country.

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The World Conservation Congress: Mediterranean priorities for the future

During the voting which took place at the IUCN Member’s Assembly at the Barcelona Congress, from a total of 144 motions studied, seven resolutions and six recommendations having direct relevance to the Mediterranean were approved. These are documents which reflect the concerns and action priorities of IUCN members, its secretariat and partners for the next four years.

The resolutions, which are to be implemented by the Union, particularly in the Mediterranean region, refer to the conservation and recovery of the Mediterranean Monk Seal (*Monachus monachus*); the conservation of the habitat of the Iberian Lynx (*Lynx pardinus*); accelerating the process of establishing marine protected areas and creating networks of marine protected areas; artisanal fishing organizations active in the sustainable management of the Mediterranean; the Great Ecological Connectivity Corridor: Cantabrian Range, Pyrenees, Massif Central and Western Alps; integrated coastal management in the Mediterranean – the Barcelona Convention; and lastly, improving the governance of the Mediterranean Sea.

On the other hand, the recommendations which are directed to third parties who deal with matters of importance related to IUCN objectives, are: cooperation between members and committees of Latin America and the Mediterranean; an increase in the pace and scale of the conservation in the Mediterranean Biome; promotion of Protected Area Categories V and VI for the conservation of biodiversity; conservation of the Western Iberian Peninsula; conservation of the River Ebro; and also the environmental impact of wind-based power production in Spanish and Portuguese mountain areas.

The final versions of the resolutions and recommendations adopted during the World Conservation Congress have been published on the IUCN Congress website.

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Link: IUCN Congress
The Moroccan Association for Ecotourism and the Protection of Nature joins IUCN

Brahim Abouelabbes, President of the Moroccan Association for Ecotourism and the Protection of Nature says that AMEPN is very pleased to become part of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

“Our membership to this Union emanates primarily from members’ concern and their belief in IUCN’s ever-increasing effort to rally the main actors about the common worries regarding the future of the Earth given the staggering development of human activity in the exploitation of the planet’s natural resources.

Admittedly, AMEPN is a small NGO, but in becoming an IUCN member, it is proving it is just as concerned about the world environmental problem and remains convinced that whoever invented the famous slogan “Think globally and act locally” has really got to the heart of the issue for the simple reason that significant environmental changes were once started by local human activity.

The growing number of NGOs working in domains for the protection of the environment and local development, both on a national and international scale, really shows that different groups of our societies are realizing how urgent it is to initiate actions to save what remains of the natural heritage and to begin rebuilding a balance which accommodates social and economic development within the conservation of natural resources. Ultimately, this is the aim of sustainable development.

AMEPN is a non-profit association which was created in 1997. Its main objective is to contribute to the conservation of nature by promoting ecotourism as a tool for valuing biodiversity, ecosystems and natural landscapes, and likewise as an alternative to the overexploitation of natural resources. Ecotourism is also the most efficient way of raising awareness amongst the general public and potential actors about the need to preserve natural heritage so it can be passed down to future generations so that they may also benefit from it.

The main accomplishment of our Association has been to establish an eco-museum for the Maâmora forest, an environmental information and education centre specially dedicated to the ecosystem of this Cork-Oak forest. It was created with funding from the Moroccan State in June 2005 and since its opening, the museum has welcomed thousands of local school children and visitors from the region. The work for raising awareness carried out by the Association has been productive due to its success in uniting all of the national actors and decision-makers involved for a recreational-planning project of this peripheral natural park, thus contributing to the protection of the Maâmora. As a result of this work, we can say that within this field, raising awareness and the pragmatic and feasible ideas are never ignored but fulfilled, and furthermore they are not only limited to this stage but also influence political decisions.”

By Brahim Abouelabbes, President of the Moroccan Association for Ecotourism and the Protection of Nature

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Welcome to new Mediterranean members

Lebanon
• Al Shouf Cedar Society (ACS)

Morocco
• Association Marocaine pour l’Ecotourisme et la Protection de la Nature (AMEPN)

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Maher Mahjoub is named new Vice Chair of the IUCN WCPA

Maher Mahjoub from Tunisia has just been named Vice Chair of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas for the region encompassing North Africa, the Middle East and West Asia.

Mr Mahjoub, a geological engineer and current Head of the Natural Sites and Heritage Division at the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development in Tunisia, said he feels “very honoured by this appointment” as well as grateful for the support received from regional councillors, Director of the Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, Margarita Astrálag, and Odeh Al-Jayyousi, Director of the IUCN Regional Office for Central and West Asia located in Amman.

For several years, Mr Mahjoub has actively worked and participated in different events organized by IUCN and the Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, amongst which include the Azahar Programme, IUCN Mediterranean Members’ meetings and the IUCN Protected Area Categories Summit held in Almeria. In addition to this, he played a fundamental role in Mediterranean events during the Barcelona Congress.
IUCN-Med experts work on current and future projects in Tunisia

IUCN experts, Pedro Regato, Senior Programme Officer for Ecosystem Management and Sustainable Development, and Aymeric Eeckman, Programme Officer for the Private Sector visited Tunisia from 2 to 7 March.

The mission was organized within the framework of the project financed by AECID: “Supporting Security and Sustainable Livelihoods through the Development of Governance Systems and the Sustainable Management of Agro-forestry Resources in Priority Areas of North Africa”.

The main objective of this mission was to begin activities linked to some of the projects from the sub-regional North Africa plan for 2008-2012 which were discussed and identified in March 2008 by IUCN members from the region. The actions which were discussed and identified related more specifically to improving the legislation on protected areas in Tunisia; the sustainable management of agro-pastoral steppe systems; improving the livelihoods and profits of local communities, with a focus on gender; and the role of the hotel and tourism sector in biodiversity conservation and local development.

For their part, the IUCN experts and members from the Association for Women and the Environment organized a visit to a rural area close to the Zaghouan National Park in order to assess the possibility of beginning a pilot project for the sustainable management of alfa ecosystems and improving the livelihoods and working opportunities of rural women, thus helping to improve and diversify the local products coming from alfa and other natural resources and increase their market opportunities through the tourism sector.

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Link: Spanish International Cooperation Agency for Development

The Development Agency for East Morocco visits our Centre

On 12 March, a delegation of specialists from the Development Agency for East Morocco travelled to Malaga to visit the Parque Tecnológico de Andalucía (PTA) and the Andalusian Technology Network (RETA).

Thanks to IUCN-Med’s location in PTA headquarters, representatives from the Agency, co-sponsor of the 2nd Alboran Meeting in Oujda, met with the Director of the Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation, Margarita Astrálaga, and her team in order to share experiences so as to continue a collaboration strategy with this Moroccan region in the field of decentralized cooperation.

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Link: Development Agency for East Morocco
In the press

A selection of stories and news articles which have been published in the Spanish press in 2009:

- Un 38% de las especies animales de los ríos de la provincia, en peligro de extinción (SUR 23/02/2009)
- El Oso está casi extinto del Pirineo, según la oficina ambiental mundial (La Mañana 22/02/2009)
- Osos en busca de hielo (La Vanguardia - Magazine 15/02/2009)
- La Tierra ya es también planeta agua (La Vanguardia 09/02/2009)
- Apuesta europea por la eólica marina (La Razón- A tu salud 08/02/2009)
- Google bucea el fondo del mar (La Razón- A tu salud 08/02/2009)
- El escribano palustre desaparece (La Nueva España 08/02/2009)

Any interesting articles about the Mediterranean published outside of Spain can be sent to:
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Staff Changes

We would like to welcome Stacey Dean who is helping as a translation intern within the Communications Department and Nieves Garcia who is returning to the Centre as Assistant to the Mediterranean Species Conservation Programme. Tania Calleja has also been helping in the Communications Department as of February. In March, Silvia Casellas and María del Mar Otero arrived to replace Sonsoles San Román and Dania Abdulmalak respectively who are away on maternity leave.

And finally, farewell to Marina Gomei, and also to Ameer Abdulla, Sarah Gotheil and François Simard who are leaving IUCN-Med to continue their careers at IUCN headquarters.

Link: IUCN-Med staff

Agenda
16-18 April, Oujda (Morocco)

From 16 to 18 April, the 2nd International Meeting on the Conservation and Sustainable Development of the Alboran Sea will be held in the city of Oujda (Morocco).

The aim of this second meeting, which governments, international organizations, NGOs, representatives from civil society and experts from the three countries involved are planning to attend, is to strengthen the Alboran movement which was created in 2007.

Algeria, Spain and Morocco are continuing to work in collaboration with IUCN for the protection of this area, thus making progress in Mediterranean transnational cooperation.

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