

**INFORMATION DOCUMENT FOR 18TH SITTING OF THE
WORLD CONSERVATION CONGRESS**

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Addendum 1 to Congress paper CGR/2/2000/2

Summary of the External Review of the IUCN Programme

IUCN is a unique and respected international organisation. It gains its strength from its membership - a world wide constituency of governments and NGOs that share the common mission of the Union. It has its technical base in thousands of conservation scientists who contribute voluntarily in global Commissions. It has a competent and dedicated Secretariat, serving, driving and delivering at global, regional and local levels.

IUCN is a good and important member of the world conservation community. Its work is essential. It maintains high professional quality, and its messages are balanced.

The complexity of the Union is its most precious asset but also its major liability. The richness of ideas, views, people, cultures and political systems in IUCN's everyday world must be balanced into a working organisation.

The review team has taken this as its primary challenge. How can the Union achieve tangible results in relation to its mission? How can the Union integrate and exploit the richness of its components? How can the Union retain its diversity and at the same time be manageable?

These questions have been asked many times and in many contexts by staff and management, members and Commissions. There are many good ideas, proposals and attempted answers. What has been lacking is leadership for reaching conclusions and for taking the requisite action. This has generated serious confusion, frustration and disorientation among management and staff at all levels. Thus, the high quality and intellectual capacity of the staff of the Union have not been used to their real potential.

The general impression of the review is that the Union is performing a great amount of good work. However, much of this work is done without using the many potential links in the Union; is scattered in many sometimes unrelated fields; and depends almost totally on the drive and commitment of the individuals involved. Good performance is usually achieved despite, rather than because of, the organisational structure of IUCN. The Union's 'programme' has tended to be a synthetic, *post hoc* rationalisation of ongoing activities. It has not provided a mechanism to link and synchronise priority activities with corresponding budgetary commitments.

We believe that the primary indicator of the usefulness of this review will be that it generates action. Therefore, besides reporting reflections on what we have seen and experienced through our journey in space and time, we make a number of straightforward proposals.

We believe that the answers to the problems outlined above lie in two major dimensions. The first dimension is the **framework**, from the mission to the individual activities, in which the directions, priorities and targets of the Union's programme evolve. The second dimension is the **interface and interaction** between the components of the Union - the members, Commissions and Secretariat - at local, regional and global level. The proposals made in this report aim mainly to develop and strengthen these dimensions of the Union.

We recommend a **framework** for the design and management of the Union's programme. The main elements of this framework are:

- the **distinctive core competencies** and comparative strengths of the Union in the conservation area, based on the scientific competence represented by the Commissions and the institutional competence represented by the membership;
- not more than six **knowledge management areas**, for developing and maintaining the distinctive competencies, for synthesising and dispersing good practice and excellence, for assessing and providing professional capacity to programmes and projects and for servicing selected international institutions and conventions;
- not more than three **targeted global programmes**: concerted, Union wide, time limited undertakings, focusing on tangible mission related achievements;
- the **regional programmes**: undivided entities in their own right, reflecting the regions' contributions to the targeted global programmes as well as the regional priorities and demands;
- the **programme management** structure and process, with defined roles for the constituencies in the programme formulation and approval process.

We believe that IUCN should be structured into a strictly limited number of organisational and budgetary units, reflecting the framework outlined above.

Further, we recommend a number of measures for strengthening the **interaction** in the Union. The main proposals are:

- reinforcement of the **role of the regions** in programme development and programme implementation;
- intensified efforts for creating **partnership between Secretariat and members** for implementation of programmes and projects, including planned capacity building, targeting new members and quality assurance measures;
- institutionalising **regional governance** forums for dialogue and for approval of regional programmes;
- extension of the interval between **World Conservation Congresses** from three to five years, to leave space and time for action and implementation;
- **linking donor funding** of programme, planning and capacity building work directly with the regions;
- better **use of the competence and capacity of the Commission** members by educating staff, members and donors about the Commissions, and creating compensation arrangements for Commission members for work with Union programmes and projects;
- establishment of a **Commission for Business and Environment** to address the increased importance of the corporate sector in conservation.

We comment on a number of other central issues for IUCN, such as the strengthening of the **learning system, including monitoring and evaluation**; the **integration of socio-economic science and gender knowledge** into changing conservation science and practice; and the concept of multi-centre structure, for better use of the world wide resources of the Union.

Most of the proposals of the review, about clarity in objectives, concentration, prioritisation, and strong links between programming and budgeting, are related to good management of the Union's resources. However, limited funding remains a constraint on many attempts for improving impact and making full use of IUCN's potential. Dependence on supportive and flexible donor assistance will be of paramount importance for the next decade and particularly during the next programme period. We hope that our comments, proposals and suggested directions for the further development of the Union will help to justify continued donor commitment.