

Sixty-second Session, General Assembly

Thematic debate entitled “Addressing Climate Change: The United Nations and the World at Work”

**Delivered by: Narinder Kakar
Permanent Observer of IUCN to the United Nations
11-12 February 2008**

Mr. President,

IUCN – the International Union for Conservation of Nature welcomes your initiative to convene this thematic debate on climate change. This debate is very timely, given the urgency for dealing with the issue, and provides an opportunity to discuss ways to address it collectively.

Mr. President, it is important to realize that although climate change will affect all, it is the poor and vulnerable who would be affected most severely. The international community's actions have therefore to be rooted in sustainable development and equity, recognizing the vulnerability of poor people, the need for economic growth and poverty alleviation and a comprehensive approach to sustainable development with its economic, social and environmental pillars. IUCN's own work on climate change focuses on links between climate change, equity and bio-diversity, and the opportunities and challenges these links present for mitigating and adapting to climate change.

“Rising to the Challenge: Partnerships on Climate Change”

We are pleased that the need for collaboration between Member States, the private sector and civil society in efforts to address the challenges posed by climate change is being realized. IUCN fully supports efforts to develop such partnerships in order to respond to the key areas described in the Bali Action Plan viz. mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer and finance.

IUCN works towards preventing bio-diversity loss in support of human well being, and in that regard wishes to highlight the value of biodiversity, and the ecosystem services it provides to reduce the impacts of climate change. Activities aimed at increasing adaptation to climate

Permanent Observer
Mission of the International
Union for the Conservation
of Nature and Natural
Resources (IUCN) to the
United Nations
801 2nd Avenue, Suite 405
New York, NY 10017
USA
Tel: +1 212 286 1076
Fax: +1 212 286 1079
iucn@un.int

World Headquarters
Rue Mauverney 28
1196 Gland
Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 999 0000
Fax: +41 22 999 0002
mail@iucn.org
www.iucn.org

change and resilience will secure livelihoods and reduce vulnerability to disaster. We therefore hope that biodiversity-related action towards climate change adaptation would be fully integrated in the development programmes of the UN agencies.

In this context, partnerships at local level (with local authorities, communities, private sector and civil society) are essential in order to ensure adaptation to climate change. IUCN highlights the crucial role of forest and water resources in climate change adaptation, and the importance of capacity building in sustainable ecosystem management to enhance adaptive capacity. In collaboration with IISD, the Stockholm Environment Institute-US and Inter-Cooperation, IUCN developed a Community-based Risk Screening Tool – Adaptation and Livelihoods (CRISTAL) that could be used by the UN development agencies in developing their programmes.

IUCN also underlines the importance of public-private partnership in order to promote transfer of technology, including “hard” and “soft” technology with a view to accelerating climate change mitigation. The UN system could further promote the work carried out under the UNFCCC on transfer of technology as well as catalyze the Global Compact as a force for technology transfer for climate change. Capacity building activities for technology needs assessment in developing countries, for example, seem crucial to IUCN.

“Responding to a Multifaceted Challenge: The UN at Work”

The UN System should ensure that the negotiating parties from developing countries are provided with the adequate technical support and linguistic services to allow them to take an active part in the negotiation process. Developing countries often lack financial, administrative and technical capacity to access the new opportunities created by mechanisms such as the Clean Development Mechanism, the Adaptation Fund, or the future REDD framework.

It is also important that all stakeholders are engaged in the design of the new framework for reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation in developing countries (REDD). IUCN welcomes the decision adopted at the 13th COP in Bali regarding the integration of REDD in a post-2012 agreement. IUCN believes that the new framework for REDD should, among other elements, be integrated into a broader strategy focused on securing deeper reductions of emissions from the use of fossil fuels rather than simply offsetting carbon emissions.

UN agencies should ensure that their investments in infrastructure and development programmes fully integrate climate change considerations, from mitigation to adaptation and that those considerations include the opportunities and challenges presented by biodiversity concerns. Screening of new investment strategies should be made taking into account the level of greenhouse gas emissions involved in each scenario and factoring the environmental and financial risks induced by climate change impacts.

Financing Adaptation

IUCN welcomes the decision adopted at the 13th COP in Bali regarding the establishment of the Adaptation Fund, with equitable representation from developed and developing countries alike. As the Secretary-General has earlier emphasized, significant

new investments need to be made in financing for adaptation, including resources from multilateral institutions together with the World Bank and the Global Environmental Facility and other sources of multilateral and bilateral financing. Increased adaptation resources could also be raised through a more robust Clean Development Mechanism, as well as through philanthropic support. Criteria should be defined to ensure that the available funds are granted as a priority to the most effective adaptation strategies and to the ecosystems and livelihoods which will be most severely affected by climate change.

Mr. President, it is important that UNFCCC is implemented in compliance with globally agreed commitments on gender equality and equity, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). UNFCCC should also develop a gender strategy, invest in gender-specific climate change research and establish a system for the use of gender-sensitive indicators and criteria for governments to use in national reporting to the UNFCCC. Equitable access should also be provided to poor women and men to climate change market-based approaches such as the Clean Development Mechanism.

Mr. President, it is very encouraging to see that the UN system is making efforts to harness the capacities of the System to the fullest, and intends to align its strengths into a coordinated approach to climate change in order to support the efforts of member states at national, regional and global levels in tackling the multifaceted challenge presented by climate change. It is also commendable that efforts are being made to explore ways of making the UN more climate-friendly and environmentally sustainable, in order to develop a climate-neutral approach to UN premises and operations that would reduce its own carbon-footprint.

Before closing, we would like to commend the work that IPCC has done, and continues to do, to assess on a comprehensive, objective and transparent basis the latest scientific, technical and socio-economic literature relevant to the understanding of the risk of human-induced climate change, its impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation. The IPCC has shown to be an effective partnership among different UN agencies to which non-UN and other actors, such as academic scientists and researchers also contribute. Its role should be strengthened as a convener and catalyst of authoritative knowledge on climate change and its interaction with ecosystems and livelihoods.

Mr. President, IUCN hopes that the United Nations would aim for a comprehensive and equitable post-2012 regime by 2009, with the inclusion of specific mitigation targets in coherence with the ultimate objective of "preventing dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system", and that necessary support to all stakeholders for equitable and effective participation in the negotiations that will take place at the 14th COP in Poznan this year and at the 15th COP in Copenhagen in 2009.

The IUCN World Conservation Congress, to be held in October 2008 in Barcelona, will have climate change as one of the central themes, and we would like to extend an invitation to all of you to join us for those discussions, so that together we can demonstrate progress and harness our collective commitment in support of a post-Kyoto regime.

I thank you, Mr. President.