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Understanding community conservation in Europe

Gerace (Calabria, Italy) – September 10-16, 2011

Workshop announcement and call for contributions

(deadline for submitting abstracts 30th April, 2011)

Local communities and indigenous peoples are widely recognised in the international arena as important **custodians of nature**. While some experts talk about communities maintaining “biological diversity” and “ecosystem functions”, others simply stress that cultural and environmental patrimonies are closely related and that any successful society needs to care for the material basis of its sustenance, development and health. The IUCN World Parks Congress held in Durban in 2003 marked a watershed in conservation thinking by stressing that indigenous peoples and local communities have a legitimate role in the governance of protected areas. This



was soon echoed by the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which called attention to *type* and *quality* of protected area governance, and to equity in conservation. Many other international congresses and instruments highlighted the role of communities as rightful and effective managers. Even more broadly, it is clear that people relate to nature for their livelihoods and perceive it as essential in their lives. Nature intertwines with their knowledge and practices and **peoples' collective relationship to nature** is a major element in the spiritual, material and cultural values that make life worth living.



At the global level, despite the enormous importance of state-property and private property, communal control and care still encompass a vital proportion of the land and water bodies in our planet. A few examples: in the Amazon Basin, indigenous territories— i.e., environments where community-based decisions and action are crucial— cover more than 197 million hectares, or 25% of the Amazon forest. In Iran, nearly 50% of forest and rangeland territory is under the effective control of traditional communities practicing seasonal transhumance across hundreds of kilometres. In Japan, basically all coastal fisheries are collectively managed by community associations with territorial use rights. Not all territories or resources under the

control of communities are sustainably managed, but many indeed are, and often at negligible cost compared to other governance regimes. In Australia, protected areas governed by indigenous peoples (Indigenous Protected Areas) encompass 23% of the country's protected areas, covering over twenty million hectares. In the USA, community restoration initiatives are returning to their natural state large-scale ecosystems in indigenous reservations. In Canada, Niger and Madagascar, the expansion of national conserved territory increasingly appears possible only by taking advantage of community conservation

capacities. In all, the diversity, extension and importance of **areas and territories conserved by local communities and indigenous peoples** (in one word “**ICCAs**”) are slowly but surely being documented and recognised throughout the world (see www.iccaforum.org and www.iccaregistry.org).



In Europe, however... is it really true that “communities” still have a role in managing and governing nature? Is that not rather the privilege and responsibility of landowners (individuals or companies) and specialised agencies of national governments? And what do we mean by “community”, in our age of individualism and globalisation? Do we even have the legal means for “communities” to assume a role as nature caretakers? And, if those means still exist, are they not a regressive step to modernity?

The land and natural resources of Europe have been strongly shaped by history, as people left their marks and embedded memories and values in basically every corner of the continent. Indeed, “**landscapes**” and “**seascapes**” are the characteristic feature of the European continent, and they often include unique wildlife, agro-biodiversity and cultural and spiritual values. The land and resources of Europe, however, are also intensively exploited. Starting with the early enclosure of the commons in thirteenth century England, ancient ties between communities and nature have been systematically replaced by the power and decisions of private landowners (aristocracy, clergy, corporations) and, in the last couple of centuries, national states. Individual and corporate landowners and state companies have jurisdiction over the greater part of the European continent and actively exploit its natural resources. And only government entities (at the municipal, regional, state, EU or other supra-national levels) usually possess a mandate for conserving biodiversity and making sure that the exploitation of natural resources is “sustainable” and does not cause irreversible damage. Is Europe thus rid of quaint common property regimes? Has this change brought clear advantages in terms of management effectiveness and good governance of nature? Or are there still examples of community-based initiatives that are innovative and “modern”? Are there examples that have proven benefits for the **survival of wild plant and animal species**? Are there examples that nurture **livelihoods, spiritual values, local identities**? Are there examples that can be inspiring and instructive for the rest of the world? The Gerace workshop provides an occasion to discuss



these and other questions on the basis of **lessons learned and cases of community-based conservation from all over Europe.**

We call for contributions that illustrate **ecosystems, areas, natural resources and species**—and their **associated cultural, spiritual and economic values**— **governed and managed by one or more local communities or indigenous peoples through customary systems and/or other effective means.** Such examples indeed exist in Europe. Some stress that they embody a few of the remaining “bio-cultural jewels” of the continent (at least one such example is a World Heritage Site, many are Sacred Natural Sites). Others call attention to the variety of poorly known and often small-scale phenomena that are invaluable for local and “capillary” conservation. And still others point at unexpected cases where the notion of “community” expands beyond locality to encompass partnerships of intent and care, possibly stretched across national boundaries and well-suited for the

conservation requirements of particular species and phenomena (e.g., the teams of well connected people who— every year— follow and protect the migration of raptors across Europe). You may wish to describe examples in terms of their **bio-cultural, livelihoods and spiritual and identity values**, but you are also kindly invited to offer an analysis of their **specific governance systems**, and of the **legal frameworks**, or even the “legal folds” and other unique conditions and opportunities, that allow them to operate effectively. In fact, we also call for broader analyses of **issues and conditions supportive of community conservation** of bio-cultural diversity and sustainable livelihoods in Europe. Community conservation is seldom recognized in national legislation, or even by society in general. Whether and how this can and should change are questions we will address in the workshop.



The Gerace workshop will gather and document a variety of examples and make possible a **Europe-wide exchange of knowledge and awareness**. But the aim is broader than sharing and diffusing information and appreciating cases rooted in diverse socio-ecological contexts. From the analysis of examples, the workshop will draw lessons for policy and practice, and formulate a number of **recommendations for ways of appropriately recognising, supporting and stimulating community conservation in Europe**. Further, UNEP WCMC will analyse opportunities for including some of the presented cases in the **ICCA Registry now under development**. And the most telling examples and lessons will be compiled for the IUCN Global Protected Areas Programme to take inspiration in designing the **forthcoming 6th World Parks Congress** (to be convened by IUCN in 2014, most likely in Australia). It is envisaged, in fact, that some cases might be recommended for illustration at the Congress itself.

Interested participants are kindly requested to develop an **abstract-- one page maximum, preferably including pictures**— describing the contribution(s) they would wish to offer to the workshop. Such contributions can take the form of **written papers** and/or **short videos** (5 to 10 minutes) describing one or more ICCA sites or broader analyses of issues and supportive or hindering conditions. Contributions should be delivered as succinct oral presentations or poster presentations at the Gerace workshop.

Please send your **abstracts by April 30, 2011** to gbf@cenesta.org, stig.johansson@metsa.fi, boris.erg@iucn.org and nigel@equilibriumresearch.com. The workshop committee (which includes more than four people) will also be extremely grateful if you will recommend ASAP specific individuals and institutions that you know personally and, in your view, should be contacted to contribute.



The received abstracts will be comparatively assessed by the workshop committee and about **30 cases will be selected to receive full sponsorship** for local transportation, room and board during the workshop in the picturesque small town of Gerace in the National Park of Aspromonte (Calabria, southern Italy). The travel costs to Lamezia Terme international airport or Reggio Calabria (via air, train or car) will have to be borne by the workshop participants. The workshop – which will gather no more than 50 participants— will last five days, with ample time reserved for field visits, including to the Aspromonte National Park. The workshop will be held in English, with translation assured in one or more other European languages. September is the perfect season to visit Southern Italy and numerous locations can be considered for pre- and post-workshop side excursions.

Workshop web page forthcoming in www.ICCAforum.org

Acronyms

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEESP	IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy
CEL	IUCN Environmental Law Commission
ICCAs	Indigenous Peoples' Conserved Territories and Areas Conserved by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WCPA	IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas

References on ICCAs available in three languages:

English

IUCN CEESP Briefing Note No. 10: <http://www.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/2010-047.pdf>
Examples and Analysis: <http://www.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/2010-048.pdf>
IUCN CEESP Briefing Note No. 9; http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/ceesp_briefing_note_9_iccas.pdf
IUCN CEESP Briefing Note No. 8
http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/governance_of_protected_areas_for_cbd_pow_briefing_note_08_1.pdf
IUCN WCPA Best practice in protected areas series, Guidelines no. 11
http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/pag_011.pdf
GEMCONBIO results
http://www.gemconbio.eu/downloads/gemconbio_eu_development_policy_guidelines_april_2008.pdf
CBD Secretariat's *Biodiversity Issues for Consideration in the Planning, Establishment and Management of Protected Areas Sites and Networks*, <http://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/cbd-ts-15.pdf>

French

IUCN CEESP Briefing Note no.10: <http://www.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/2010-047-Fr.pdf>
Examples and Analysis: <http://www.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/2010-048-Fr.pdf>

Spanish

IUCN CEESP Briefing Note no.10: <http://www.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/2010-047-Es.pdf>
Examples and Analysis: <http://www.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/2010-048-Es.pdf>

