

**Embargoed until 00:01GMT on Monday 7 June, 2010**

## Stop oil and gas exploration now, says IUCN

**Gland, Switzerland, 7 June, 2010 (IUCN)** - Following the catastrophic Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) calls for a global moratorium on oil and gas exploitation in ecologically sensitive areas, including deepwater ocean sites and polar areas.

In a statement from the ruling body of the world's oldest and largest conservation organization, IUCN says that the rising demand for energy is leading us into more difficult environments, increasing the risk of costly accidents with a price that is too high both for human livelihoods and the natural systems which support them.

*"The technology to minimize the risks and impacts of catastrophes such as the Deepwater Horizon oil spill is obviously lacking at present," says IUCN's Director General, Julia Marton-Lefèvre. "Because our understanding of the impacts of this catastrophe is inadequate we must stop oil and gas exploitation - not just deepwater ocean sites but all ecologically sensitive areas, including polar areas."*

The statement, signed by Marton-Lefèvre and IUCN President Ashok Khosla, says that six weeks on from the explosion that caused the Gulf spill, it is clear that the ecological and social damage will be more severe than even the Exxon Valdez spill of 1989.

Oil reaching the coast will damage coastal grasses and sea grass beds that are vital nursery grounds for shrimp and habitats for numerous other animals and plants. An estimated 90 percent of the seafood from the Gulf of Mexico is produced by the marshes of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. More than 130,000 jobs are estimated to be directly affected by the spill. The immediate cost to the Louisiana economy has been put at more than US\$4 billion, but the true cost to ecosystems and livelihoods will be much higher. Other Caribbean states, like Mexico, Cuba, Bahamas and even Bermuda, are predicted to be affected by the oil over the coming months.

*"Our transition to a clean energy future must start now - investment in research and development for clean technology and energy efficiency must be ramped up," says IUCN President Ashok Khosla. "Our economies need to be built increasingly on low carbon inputs. All energy solutions, even fully renewable energy sources, have environmental consequences, so comprehensive energy strategies need to be urgently developed that take full account of biodiversity and livelihood impacts."*

Business as usual is not an option. The global nature of the problem calls for collaborative action between countries, industry and civil society. We urge the corporate energy sector to join with us in creating new forms of economic organization, technological advancement and support tightened governmental regulations.

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**To download the full statement please go to:**

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**About IUCN** - IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges. IUCN works on biodiversity, climate change, energy, human livelihoods and greening the world economy by supporting scientific research, managing field projects all over the world, and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 1,000 government and NGO members and almost 11,000 volunteer experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 staff in 60 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world. [www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)