

**IUCN Director General's speech on Biodiversity
at G8 Ministers of Environment meeting
Siracusa, Sicily, Italy, 23 April 2009**

Thank you Minister Prestigiacomo and congratulations and thanks to Italy for organizing this meeting both in the choice of this unique place as well as the choice of topics and participants.

Many of you were with IUCN as we celebrated our 60th birthday at the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona last year. While on the one hand I am slightly disappointed that the message about the seriousness of the loss of biodiversity has not taken deeper root after so many of us working on this for so long, I am also pleased that the world, beyond our insider community, is finally interested in biodiversity. The G8+ meetings should take pride in their role in this. When I refer to the 'insider community' I remind you that all of you are members of IUCN along with a thousand of others: governments and NGOs. But, however large our community is, we know that we must do everything we can to reach others with our important message

IUCN warmly welcomes the Carta di Siracusa and welcomes the commitment to the need to keep nature, our life-support system, healthy and resilient. We will work with you to ensure that the message in the Carta reaches every corner of this planet.

The establishment and work undertaken to achieve the Biodiversity 2010 Target provided us with important lessons on which a post 2010 framework must be constructed. As we discuss the post 2010 target we know that we must design a solid, measurable, science-based strategy that builds on the work carried out on the run-up to 2010, in particular in the development of indicators. These include the completion and strengthening of the Red List Index, indices on the rate and loss of populations and habitats; of biodiversity conservation sites; trends in invasive species, and connectivity and integrity of ecosystems.

The post 2010 target framework must also include the enhancement of the implementation of the Programmes of Work developed under the CBD including work on protected areas. We are also committed to the strengthening of marine protected areas that are comprehensive, effectively managed and ecologically representative, including in the high seas. Thanks especially to you, Minister Prestigiacomo, for having recently designated Plemmirio, off the coast of Siracusa, as a Marine Protected Area.

There is also need to support the debate on reaching an international regime on Access and Benefit Sharing

IUCN has been closely associated with The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) study presented a few moments ago by Pavan Sukhdev. As the study shows, conserving biodiversity helps to reduce poverty and enhance human well being; helps mitigate and adapt to climate change, reduce risk and provide new opportunities for business. As for climate, investing in biodiversity today will avoid future costs for ecosystem renovation. As you will all agree with me, the TEEB study, born out of your deliberations in Potsdam just two years ago, is no longer referred to as the 'Stern-like' work, but has taken on an important life of its own.

We will need to focus all our energies to accomplish all that we know is needed in the months before the Year of Biodiversity and the important CBD COP to be held in Japan toward the end of that Year. Already the fact that this meetings is taking this so seriously is excellent and encouraging.

IUCN is also very supportive of the plans to set up a mechanism to bridge the gap between the science of what we already know and what still needs to be known about biodiversity and the decision-making process. We are actively participating therefore in the consultation for the establishment of an Integrated Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and hope that this will be set up and begin to work as soon as possible.

We all know that we have a great deal to do before 2010. and this meeting and its Carta di Siracusa will help us on our journey.

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