



IUCN Director General Speech at UN Climate Convention Conference of the Parties (COP14) High-Level Segment

Poznan, 12 December 2008

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, builds on its membership of both governments and non-governmental organizations to: 'influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable'.

Nature is our best ally in the face of climate change. Intact ecosystems have many functions. They are more resilient to changing climate; they are more productive, they help people sustain their livelihoods and adapt to the impacts of climate change; they minimize loss of life and property during natural disasters and speed up natural recovery. Healthy ecosystems can also be efficient carbon sinks. The critical role of ecosystems in supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation is clearly stated in the draft findings released by the Convention on Biological Diversity's Ad Hoc Expert Group on climate change and biodiversity, presented here this week.

8000 members and partners of IUCN met in Barcelona at the World Conservation Congress in October this year to discuss major environmental issues, among which climate change figured prominently. A key resolution from our Congress, urged the adoption of ambitious emission reduction targets that will reduce the risk of global average temperature exceeding 2°C above pre-industrial figures. In response to recent scientific evidence, IUCN notes that more ambitious emission reduction targets will be needed. A temperature rise of 2°C is expected to kill off up to 85% of corals, raise sea levels, increase tropical diseases and intensify storms. We trust that the developed countries will take the lead in making such targets one of the cornerstones of the post 2012 regime.

IUCN also welcomes the statement made by the G77 and China that building on their current domestic efforts, non Annex I Parties will take nationally appropriate mitigation actions in the context of their sustainable development.

We are encouraged by the interest shown by Parties towards the integration of forests within the climate change agenda, notably with regard to reduced emissions through deforestation and degradation (REDD). We wish to emphasize the vital importance of the second D in REDD: Degradation. Avoiding degradation through approaches such as Forest Landscape Restoration has the great potential of increasing carbon stocks. Landscapes dominated by primary forests and other largely intact terrestrial ecosystems contain vast stores of organic carbon. A challenge for the international community is to strengthen existing mechanisms, such as protected areas, and develop new mechanisms, such as payments for ecosystem services, for avoiding emissions from these ecosystems with co-benefits for biodiversity and livelihoods. REDD should also ensure equitable benefit sharing and secure the rights of local communities, including Indigenous Peoples.

By addressing the loss and degradation of forest ecosystems, REDD could contribute to broader environmental and development objectives. However, for this to happen, the drivers of deforestation and degradation need to be properly addressed. Indeed, complementary national level action to strengthen governance will be a fundamental part of this challenging yet critically necessary endeavour.

IUCN and its members note the importance attached to adaptation in the current negotiations, and we are encouraged that a number of Parties have made reference here in Poznan to the role of ecosystem-based adaptation. This builds on community-based approaches to maintain essential ecosystem services such as providing food and clean water. IUCN therefore is fully prepared to support Parties in their implementation of ecosystem-based adaptation.

IUCN has also noted an increased awareness of the gender implications of climate change and expects

gender to be mainstreamed in future climate change policy and action.

IUCN looks forward to continuing to contribute to the negotiations and urges Parties to renew their resolve to secure a comprehensive global agreement for a new climate regime in Copenhagen next year. We are confident that all of you will rise to this challenge, and secure a sustainable world for future generations.

Thank you for your attention.

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