

**Speech by the Director of IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation,
Antonio Troya, at the Senior Officials' Meeting of the Union for the
Mediterranean Forum and the 40th Governing Board Assembly of the Anna
Lindh Foundation**

Malaga, 10 June 2013

Good evening, distinguished ambassadors, it is a great honour for the International Union for Conservation of Nature to be able to address the Meeting of High Officials of the Union for the Mediterranean Forum and the Assembly of Anna Lindh Foundation's Governing Board.

I want to thank the Union for the Mediterranean for giving me the opportunity to present briefly the main activities of the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation since its establishment in 2001 until today.

Nonetheless, before moving on to the regional level, let me introduce IUCN – the International Union for Conservation of Nature, with this corporate video which explains the range of work developed by our organisation at an global scale.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

The most outstanding places on earth are also the most threatened. The Mediterranean is considered the third richest hotspot in the world in terms of biodiversity and therefore constitutes one of the most important genetic reservoirs on the planet. A natural capital essential to our development, right now and in the future.

Mediterranean waters only cover 0.8 % of the total sea surface in the planet, hosting however 7% of all known marine species.

Indeed, the Mediterranean hosts a wide variety of land and sea ecosystems, however, they have limited productivity and high fragility, which largely determines their use.

The ancient Mediterranean wise knowledge has helped to achieve a balance between exploitation and conservation, achieving, most of the time, a harmonious coexistence between human being and his environment. However, this balance is severely threatened today.

The increasing population pressure has led to a parallel rise in demand for natural resources. The intensive development of the Mediterranean coasts, the decrease of the availability of water resources, both in quality and quantity, the cumulative land and marine pollution, the decline of ecosystems and the increasing loss of soil by erosion, to name some examples, are bottleneck factors for the future development of the region, and in some cases vectors of social and political conflicts. This, coupled to the scenarios of the climate change models applied to the Mediterranean region, points to the urgent need to strengthen environmental actions within the framework of international and regional cooperation.

IUCN's RESPONSE

In this framework of opportunities and challenges at once, IUCN Members in the Mediterranean have identified the need to conceive an environmental programme and a Centre to develop it with the objective of improving human development and wellbeing and bring an environmental perspective to cooperation in the Mediterranean.

Following the resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the IUCN Members during the World Conservation Congress in Amman (Jordan) in 2000, the Spanish government and IUCN, with the ongoing support of all Mediterranean countries, have been working together to make the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN-Med) a reality. As a result, the Centre was established in Spain thank to the agreement signed on 5 December 2000 between IUCN, the Spanish Ministry of Environment and Andalusia's regional environmental ministry, starting operating in October 2001 in this city, Malaga. The Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECID) joined the agreement in 2010. Also the same year, the Centre assumes the implementation of a new IUCN Programme specifically designed for North Africa.

MISSION

Through its 12 years of existence, the mission of the Centre has been to influence, encourage and assist Mediterranean societies to achieve the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources as well as to boost sustainable development in the Mediterranean region.

OUR WORKING PARTNERS

The IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation has become a platform for dialogue amongst Governments, civil society and the scientific community, capable of promoting conservation, cooperation and sustainable development in the region.

At present, IUCN-Med gathers 198 members (14 States, 25 government agencies, 140 NGOs) in 21 countries across the Mediterranean.

We also work in close collaboration with the main international and regional institutions and Conventions affecting the Mediterranean basin such as the Barcelona Convention, ACCOBAMS (Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area), the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean of the FAO or the Union for the Mediterranean.

It is precisely with the Union for the Mediterranean, along with four other organizations (MIO-ECSDE, WWF Mediterranean, Institute Afua and RAED), that we are preparing the launch of a project that aims at strengthening the capacities of the civil society in North Africa, in the field of water resources and the environment.

I would like to highlight the fact that, to date, we have signed more than 60 Agreements of Understanding with various public and private institutions in the region for the development of the IUCN Mediterranean programme.

THE IUCN PROGRAMME

The IUCN Intersessional Programme 2013-2016 was approved by the Assembly of Members at the latest IUCN World Conservation Congress held in Jeju Island (South Korea) in September last year.

The strategic areas of the IUCN programme are three:

- Valuing and Conserving Nature
- Fostering an effective and equitable governance of nature's use
- Deploying nature-based solutions to face up to the issues of climate change, food security and development

THE IUCN MEDITERRANEAN PROGRAMME

Simultaneously, the IUCN Programme for the Mediterranean and the North Africa Programme 2013-2016 were also approved. Both are based on the experience gathered through the Centre's activities and on the objectives set by the three conventions of the United Nations on biologic diversity, climate change and combat against desertification ; on the international conventions and agreements specific to the Mediterranean Region and, finally, on the terms of reference included in the Collaboration Protocol signed with Spain.

Since its inception, IUCN-Med has developed a total of 65 projects, equivalent to an investment of nearly EUR 17,000,000.

Within these programmes, the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation works has focused on the following main field of actions:

- **Increasing knowledge on biodiversity and natural resources** through the identification of key biodiversity areas (in particular related to freshwater habitats), the assessment of the conservation status of less known species and the strengthening the exchange of information and data on biodiversity among Mediterranean stakeholders.
- **Valuing the Mediterranean biodiversity** in order to demonstrate how species, habitat and ecosystems are vital pieces for the livelihoods and sustainable development of Mediterranean societies, and how they constitute assets for the creation of new economic development niches and for job creation for local communities.
- **Capacity building of public biodiversity managers** and of Civil Society Organisation has been one of the major concerns than underpinned IUCN activity in the Mediterranean region and particularly in the Southern and Eastern rim. The exchange of knowledge between the scientific, NGO and political communities on best management practices to provide nature-based solutions to the degradation of a rapidly evolving environment in the Mediterranean, is at the core of our business.
- **Cooperation with the main international conventions and regional agreements** (such as the Barcelona Convention and the UNEP) to improve the Governance of the Mediterranean Sea, paying a particular attention to the role of Marine Protected Areas, has been a priority initiative for IUCN-Med.

In this context, IUCN-Med has produced more than 60 publications and reports, all made available to governments, administrations and the Mediterranean civil society.

The Centre has supported and facilitated initiatives for the creation of a network of Marine Protected Areas that is coherent and ecologically representative for the Mediterranean with the aim of contributing to the implementation of regional Conventions such as the Barcelona Convention, and to the Network of Managers of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean (MedPAN).

It has supported regional governance processes for the adoption of conservation measures and the improvement of the status of deep sea ecosystems in the Mediterranean in cooperation with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean of the FAO and the United Nations Programme for the Environment (UNEP), together with other environmental organisations.

It has developed capacity-building programs for public administrations in the area of conservation and contributed to the transfer of knowledge between Mediterranean countries.

It has also contributed to a better knowledge of the socioeconomic value of species and ecosystems in order to point out the existing synergies between the use of natural resources and the upholding of sustainable livelihoods in the Mediterranean region.

Its trajectory has made IUCN-Med into:

- A reliable scientific voice in a complex socioeconomic scenario where different actors come into play with various kinds of abilities and skills
- A strong advisory body to find solutions to the major environmental challenges in the region
- An organization that focuses on innovation by designing new alternatives for sustainable development, combining traditional knowledge with new technologies.

Biodiversity, natural resources, our environment is one of the fundamental bases of development and welfare in our society. It is therefore essential to strengthen cooperation mechanisms and financial policy to ensure the sustainability of our future.

The new Mediterranean context offers a meaningful opportunity towards the impulse of the Barcelona process, where the environment is a strong interdependence cause amongst countries and can become, at the same time, a sustainable source of economic prosperity for all.

In this sense, the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation presents itself an instrument and a potential partner for the Union for the Mediterranean to the service of the Barcelona process, contributing its capacity to weave cooperation networks, acting as a bridge between different actors and institutions in the region and supporting environmental and conservation policies as a solid base for solidarity and regional cohesion on which to build a common and prosperous Mediterranean.

Thank very much for your attention.