



IUCN
World
Conservation
Congress
Barcelona 2008

Looking forward to 2008

Year-end message from the IUCN Director General
December 2007

As 2007, my first year as IUCN's Director General, comes to a close, and colleagues throughout the IUCN world stop to take a short but well deserved rest, it is a good time to look back on the year past and forward to 2008.

The last 12 months have seen major shifts in public opinion, with citizens everywhere demanding more and better information on environmental issues. The Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the IPCC and Al Gore recognized many years of hard work by climate scientists and policy

makers. While we celebrate this crucial interest in climate change, and continue to support climate policy, research and action through the IUCN network, we must also continue our sixty-year battle to protect biodiversity.

As environmental concerns start to be truly integrated into decision-making processes, IUCN needs to continue adapting to maintain its leadership role in the coming years. I believe we are on the right track, and I have no doubt that we can meet this challenge.

I sincerely believe that no other organization has the talent and competence that we have: our Commissions bring together the best specialists; our members represent a huge range of expertise; and our multi-cultural Secretariat – present in over 40 countries worldwide – is full of dedicated and knowledgeable people

During 2007, many of us – members, Commissions, Council and staff – have come together on a number of occasions. Our Council met twice: once in Gland and once in South Africa, where the high point was a meeting with President Nelson Mandela. We supported a large number of expert meetings, published numerous scientific reports, and brought together Commissions, members and partners in close to 100 meetings and events in developing the new IUCN Programme for 2009–2012.

We were actively involved in numerous intergovernmental meetings, including the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali, CITES in the Hague, the Governing Council of UNEP in Nairobi and other various UN meetings where we continue to be the voice of nature, thanks to our permanent observer status.

We have reinforced partnerships with our donors, and following Council's direction, developed new partnerships with the private sector, local communities and parliamentarians.

On a more personal note, the past year has been an exciting and challenging one; a year of discovery and learning; of difficult but necessary decision making and of an increasingly clear sense of purpose for IUCN. Meeting members and our staff all over the world, representing IUCN in various international meetings, and dedicating a lot of time to fund and visibility raising has been demanding, exhilarating and extremely useful.

Next year will be an important one, for IUCN as for the environmental movement. It should be the year when we truly start to see synergies, not only inside IUCN, but also between governments, NGOs and the private sector. If we are successful – and I sincerely believe we will be – our Congress in Barcelona will mark a turning point for IUCN and for the entire environmental movement. We have to use the momentum created worldwide by the challenge of climate change to bring about the profound changes needed for a truly sustainable future.

IUCN's greatest assets are its people. I truly believe that by working together, the great IUCN family can be a catalyst for change. That should be our goal for 2008.

I am grateful for the warm welcome you have extended to me throughout this year and for all that I have learned from so many of you.

My sincerest wishes for a productive, peaceful and equitable 2008 for all of us.

Julia Marton-Lefèvre