

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION  
of the INTERNATIONAL UNION  
FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE  
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to the UNITED NATIONS

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**Statement to the Economic and Social Council  
Substantive Session of 2005, High Level Segment**

**Achieving the internationally agreed development goals,  
including those contained in the Millennium Declaration,  
as well as implementing the outcomes of the major  
United Nations conferences and summits: progress  
made, challenges, and opportunities**

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# **IUCN Statement to the Economic and Social Council Substantive Session of 2005 - High Level Segment**

**New York, 1 July 2005**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

IUCN welcomes the Report of the Secretary General for this session contained in document E/2005/56 and is in complete agreement with the report's understanding that the Millennium Development Goals and the outcomes of the UN's major conferences are interrelated, interdependent and mutually supportive. Human rights, women's equality, and sustainable development, for example, are all cross-cutting themes that underpin these Goals. I would like to focus our remarks on the relationship between the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and MDG7 on environmental sustainability on the one hand, and the rest of the MDGs on the other.

The role of sustainable development in the achievement of global goals and targets was recognized by the General Assembly in resolution A/RES/57/253, welcoming the outputs of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. In that resolution, the General Assembly decided "to adopt sustainable development as a key element of the overarching framework for United Nations activities, in particular for achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration."

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are interconnected and cannot be achieved in isolation, nor can they be achieved sequentially. The achievement of MDG7 on environmental sustainability in particular is essential if we are to meet the other MDGs on poverty, water, health, nutrition, and gender equality. Loss of biodiversity and the ecosystem services that biodiversity provides can have serious, and sometimes catastrophic, impacts on the world's population and the poor in particular. Some brief statistics can help to illustrate this point. According to some estimates, 75% of the world's 3 billion poor live in rural areas and they depend heavily on natural resources for their survival. One billion Asians rely on fish as their primary source of protein and the fishing industry globally employs some 200 million people. Yet, 14 out of the 17 fisheries worldwide are in decline today, impacting both food security and household incomes. The WHO notes that environmental factors such as unsafe drinking water and smoke from biomass cooking fires cause about 25% of all preventable illnesses.

As the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment clearly indicates, investment in environmental sustainability is essential if we are to achieve the MDGs. Rather than being a "tax on development" or an "add-on" to the development agenda, this investment is an effective and efficient intervention and leverage point for development. Environmental sustainability supports and integrates multiple development goals and is a sound investment, especially for poverty reduction. A recent study by the Poverty Environment Partnership looks at a range of investment opportunities in improved environmental management and concludes that many of them make sense on economic as well as environmental grounds. One key study shows that investments in water and soil conservation of up to US\$36 billion would save \$53 billion in agricultural losses. The study also found that the world spends roughly \$1 trillion on subsidies in the agriculture, energy and water sectors. Removal of a mere 10% of the most socially and environmentally perverse subsidies would therefore reduce environmental degradation and liberate more resources for poverty elimination than is currently provided by global aggregate ODA.

IUCN therefore calls for the following priority actions:

- Ensure that environmental sustainability, and the existing national plans and strategies that articulate investment priorities for it (e.g. National Sustainable Development Strategies, sectoral strategies, and national strategies and action plans pursuant to multilateral environmental

agreements), are mainstreamed into national planning frameworks for growth, poverty reduction, and each of the other MDGs.

- To enable this, donor governments should commit to significantly increase their ODA as well as commit to invest a proportionally larger share of *new* ODA flows to achieving environmental sustainability; and recipient countries should commit to the equitable and effective use of ODA.
- Recognize and integrate the contributions of ecosystem services to household and national economies as well as the economic and livelihoods costs of environmental degradation, and commit to developing and using better measurement tools and decision-making frameworks.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Created in 1948, IUCN - The World Conservation Union brings together 79 States, 114 Government agencies, 800 plus NGO's, and some 10,000 scientists and experts from 181 countries in a unique worldwide partnership. IUCN's mission is 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.

IUCN is the world's largest environmental knowledge network and has helped over 75 countries to prepare and implement national conservation and biodiversity strategies. IUCN is a multicultural, multilingual organization with 1000 staff located in 62 countries. Its headquarters are in Gland, Switzerland.