

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

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**IUCN Statement for the thematic
discussions on meeting the growing needs
for energy services: renewable energy for
poverty eradication and productive
activities**

**14th Session of the UN
Commission on Sustainable Development**

**3 May 2006
New York**

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IUCN
The World Conservation Union

IUCN Statement to 14th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

New York, 3 May 2006

Thank you, Chair. My delegation welcomes this opportunity to engage in this thematic dialogue on renewable energy and poverty reduction. My delegation would like to focus on an issue that received relatively little explicit attention in the otherwise excellent report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.17/2006/3), namely, the relationship between biodiversity and energy production, distribution and consumption. As the Secretary-General's report emphasizes, about 2.4 billion people in the world, including some 90% of rural dwellers, depend on traditional biomass sources for energy for cooking and heating. These include charcoal, fuel wood, crop residues and dung. These are actually all critical ecosystem services for the poorest of the poor. Other critical ecosystem services for energy production include regulation of hydrological flows for hydro-generation and the maintenance of soil fertility for agriculture and forests for fuel.

The world is considering a variety of alternative energy systems, for example an energy mix with a greater share of renewable energy sources. Our key point is that it is important to consider biodiversity while designing any energy system. And it is especially important to consider the impacts of existing energy systems that may damage or deplete biodiversity and ecosystem services in the short term, and thus human well-being in the long term. In this context, the impacts of fossil fuel use in forcing climate change have to be addressed as a matter of priority. IUCN applauds progress in the framework of the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol processes, and encourages governments to continue the progress in those fora. My delegation would also like to call attention to paragraph 20 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, which called for the removal of harmful subsidies that inhibit sustainable development and the reduction of market distortions in order to better reflect the environmental impacts of energy choices.

Mr. Chairman, my delegation also recognizes that a reliance on rudimentary biomass energy sources is not a sufficient answer. We need only look at the well-documented health impacts, especially on the respiratory health of women and children, to know that we need a better and more comprehensive approach. The development of modern biomass energy production from cellulose crops is very promising and various countries are increasing the contribution of these technologies in their energy mix. Many of these renewable energy sources are particularly promising for developing countries especially when they use indigenous materials and labor and do not require importation of expensive equipment. More broadly developing countries need to have improved and facilitated access to clean and efficient technologies and energy sources as a key factor to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and especially poverty reduction. Also, all countries need to improve energy efficiency and environmentally friendly energy production.

To help establish a practical information base for more informed decision-making, IUCN is working to establish a resource center for governments, communities and the private sector to: convene stakeholder-based decision-making support fora; provide technical guidance to national decision-making processes on energy futures; assess biodiversity & livelihood implications of alternative energy production, distribution, & consumption technologies; develop tools to assess and manage biodiversity impacts of energy systems; mobilise conservation knowledge/expertise; provide input into global policy processes; and provide input into corporate governance systems.

In closing, Chair, a stronger focus on the relationship between energy and biodiversity will allow decision makers to ensure a long-term provision of essential ecosystem services for the poor, and better contribute to sustainable development. Thank you, Chair.

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.