

Second Committee

Agenda Item 54 – Sustainable Development

Delivered by Mr. Narinder Kakar

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New York, USA

At its last session, the General Assembly called for the effective implementation of the commitments, programmes and time-bound targets adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and reaffirmed the objective of strengthening the implementation of Agenda 21. The World Conservation Union – IUCN, welcomes the progress made as reported in the background document prepared for this agenda item (A/62/262). IUCN is however concerned that biodiversity is still being lost at unprecedented rates, the majority of the planet's essential ecosystem services are degraded and unsustainably managed, and the levels of CO₂ continue to increase with serious impacts on our climate. This environmental degradation is affecting, and will increasingly affect, the wellbeing of our societies, but also our economic growth and development, as shown by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Stern reports on climate change. Mr. Chair, 20 years after the publication of the Brundtland report, the need to achieve sustainable development by linking the environmental, economic and social pillars, is more needed than ever before. We thus urge the General Assembly to call for decisive action in the implementation of the sustainable development commitments, through the mobilization of financial and technological resources, capacity building and the integration of environmental sustainability in development strategies and policies at all levels.

Regarding climate change, IUCN welcomes the level of attention given by the international community in the last months to this serious threat, including the thematic debate held by the General Assembly in July and the high level meeting convened by the Secretary General last September. We applaud the resulting messages emphasizing the linkages between climate change and the ability of countries to meet the Millennium Development Goals and the need for an urgent global response to climate change under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and at the second session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol made important progress, including in advancing the adaptation agenda and the two-track approach to discussions to determine the further directions of global action on climate change. But the current scientific evidence shows

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that unprecedented efforts are needed to address climate change and its impacts. IUCN hopes that the political momentum that has now been created should contribute to the needed action at the coming meetings of the Convention and the Protocol in Bali. We thus urge Parties to agree on a mandate to negotiate a post 2012 comprehensive framework under the convention by 2009. We also stress the need to give due consideration to the links between climate change and biodiversity, especially the benefits of a landscape approach to natural resource management that ensures sustainable livelihoods, for mitigating and adapting to climate change, as well as the potential effects of climate change response strategies on biodiversity.

Concerning energy, IUCN is concerned with the lack of a consensus decision text at the last session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, both given the importance of this issue for development, as well as the crucial role that the Commission plays as the "body responsible for sustainable development within the United Nations" (UNGA Resolution 61/195). Mr. Chairman, the energy mix of today's world is contributing to biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. Society is however, at the brink of a significant change in energy production and consumption patterns. This will create openings for new technologies and innovations. It is important to ensure that these technologies and innovations result in energy systems that are simultaneously environmentally sound, economically viable, and socially equitable. We welcome in this regard the report prepared for this session on the promotion of new and renewable sources of energy. We would like to stress that when considering alternative fuels, such as biofuels, as means to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and thus mitigate climate change, certain production processes associated with biofuels production, particularly those involving deforestation or land conversion, can result in increased greenhouse gas emissions as well as in severe consequences for biodiversity. IUCN thus believes that robust standards and criteria for alternative fuels are needed that fully account for and safeguard against the range of environmental and social impacts associated with the full lifecycle of such fuel options. In the first instance, they must not undermine, but rather positively contribute, to the Millennium Development Goals. Increased local, national and international efforts will be needed to achieve the energy elements of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. IUCN urges governments to learn from the experience of CSD 15 and to ensure that the Commission contributes at its full potential when addressing the important thematic cluster on agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa, at its 16th session in 2008.

Concerning the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, IUCN welcomed the adoption of the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention, as well as the recognition of the links between climate change, desertification and human wellbeing. IUCN promotes a systemic approach to the problem of desertification and its relationship to land degradation, in the context of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We call on the General Assembly to promote strengthened action in the context of the Convention and CSD 16.

Regarding biodiversity, IUCN welcomes the progress made in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in implementing the decisions taken by its Conference of the Parties (COP8) in 2006. We also applaud the agreement by the G8 to increase their efforts for the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target. IUCN would like to recall in this regard the General Assembly Resolution 60/1 on the 2005 World Summit in which Heads of State and government reaffirmed their commitment to fulfill the 2010 biodiversity target and we urge governments to act decisively to reverse the current trend of degradation of the ecosystem services on which development depends. In this context, IUCN looks forward to the CBD COP9 to be held in May 2008 in Germany and to the creation of political impetus towards 2010, which was declared by this Assembly as the United Nations International Year of Biodiversity. IUCN would also like to highlight the progress made in advancing the negotiation of an international regime on access and benefit sharing in the context of the Convention. This is a critical element for achieving greater sustainability and equity in the use of biodiversity and we thus urge Parties to conclude negotiations at the earliest possible time before 2010, as decided by the COP.

Concerning the 24th Session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, IUCN welcomed the ministerial discussions on globalization and the recognition of the imperative for the environmental community to move more decisively in linking to other sectors engaged in globalization. IUCN wishes to stress the need to make progress on the international environmental governance agenda, especially in the context of the General Assembly's consultation process on the institutional framework of the UN

environmental activities and in its consideration of the recommendations made by the Secretary General's High-Level Panel on System-wide Coherence. We wish to highlight in this regard, the need to strengthen UNEP as the environmental pillar of the UN; enhance implementation at national level through stronger collaboration with UNDP; promote further coordination among multilateral environmental agreements; and, importantly, make sustainable development effectively part of the "overarching framework of the United Nations activities" (UNGA Resolution 57/253) in order to achieve greater and more effective integration of the environment into all United Nations operations.

In closing, IUCN wishes to emphasize the importance of engaging major groups in the efforts of the United Nations to achieve sustainable development. IUCN calls more particularly, for more engagement of women in these discussions and for increased integration of women's contributions to natural resource management as a key factor to achieve sustainable development.

Mr Chair, please be assured of IUCN's ongoing commitment to contribute to the work of the United Nations in addressing these critical issues.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Created in 1948, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) brings together 84 States, 108 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 1,000 staff located in 62 countries.