

The first meeting of our new Steering Committee was held in February 2009. The minutes are being prepared and will be put on our website for consultation by CEM-members shortly.

The participants to the Steering Committee meeting were all very positive about the meeting and its outcome. They expressed their appreciation for working in such a small group in an ambiance of mutual partnership. The discussions with secretariat staff other than the EMP enriched our discussions and provided useful insight in the functioning of the Union. The input by Kalev Sepp who was invited as the Regional Vice Chairs for Eastern Europe, was much appreciated. Unfortunately, the RVC from Western Europe, Hein Rune Skjoldal, was unable to attend on this occasion.

*CEM matters:*

- The search for CEM-members to lead the membership in the different regions and to give guidance to the themes has started. The regions and themes have been assigned to the different members of the Steering Committee that are going to look for leading experts in each field with sufficient time available to head each group. *Each member is invited to indicate his interest and availability for a specific theme or themes. You may expect a mailing about this from Pat Hawes shortly.*
- Without anticipating too much on our work plan, I like to raise the curtain at this stage a little bit for the challenging idea of organizing “summer schools” for training in Ecosystem Management. We do have a lot of expertise within our Commission on courses on Ecosystem Management for different target groups, and it is important to bring these together. SC-member Masse Lô will follow this up.
- We regularly receive requests to provide expertise on issues specific to ecosystem management for which we consult our members database. For that reason it is very important that when you renew your membership as required by IUCN’s statutes, that you indicate clearly your fields of expertise which usually coincide with your field of interest. For instance, during the last period we received requests for expertise on carbon sequestration by mangroves, on interactions between ecosystems and hydraulics in West-Africa, and on Biodiversity Action Plans from the Private Sector. In all cases we have been able to submit the names of CEM-members competent in the requested field.
- At this moment a drylands meeting is being held on in Nairobi. CEM members like Mike Mortimer who together with his colleagues from Nigeria and Niger developed innovative approaches for management of ecosystems in Northern Nigeria plays an active role there.
- Angela Andrade is the SC’s main person to channel CEM’s contribution into CBD. I am very pleased that Gill Shepherd has agreed to strengthen our input into this process as Gill has proven to be very instrumental in getting our message on the Ecosystem Approach across for different, often non-specialist, audiences.
- We decided to consider merging the intersessional programme for CEM and the Ecosystem Management Programme of the secretariat. This would not only move us towards the “One Programme” policy of IUCN, but could also be much more efficient in terms of use of human resources and funds. Neville Ash will be considering the implications of this, and the updated CEM plan will be made available to all CEM members.

*From the Regions*

- Annadel Cabanban RVC for South-East Asia has been invited to attend a meeting of the Regional IUCN Committee in Bangkok. She is also actively involved in a proposal to conserve Coral Reefs in Serawak, Malaysia together with major stakeholders from the local fishing communities and ecotour-operators.
- We received a request from Latin America to start a specialist group on grassland ecosystems on that continent, to which we reacted positively.

*General IUCN matters*

- The Financial crisis is also affecting IUCN and important budget-cuts are to be made. The Union’s management has decided not to intervene with the Commissions’ budget as the Commissions are key to the realisation of the Union’s programme and its scientific credibility, and since the budgets are quite limited already.