Flash Report – July 2009 Piet Wit, Chair of CEM/IUCN

It is holiday time in this part of our world but that does not mean that CEM has come to a standstill. On the contrary, I sometimes have the impression that this is the season when volunteers from CEM have the time to work for the better management of our ecosystems.

CEM matters:

- Radhika Murti of the Ecosystem Management Programme has been working on updating our web-site. All Regions and Thematic Groups have been given a page on which they can put information about their region or theme. If you feel that you have something that is relevant to be put on this page, please get into contact with the Theme Leader of the Thematic Group or with the RVC from the region that the information is most relevant to. For items that are of global importance but do not fit into a thematic group yet, please contact me or Radhika Murti directly (radhika.murti@iucn.org).
- The joint task force for next year's conference on steppe management in relation to climate change has been put together. Mrs. Marja van Staalduinen (marjavs@xs4all.nl) is leading the group from the CEM-side, Mr. Munkhbatis the contact point for the Hustai National Park (munkhtolui@yahoo.com).
- If you have issues that you would like the Steering Committee to discuss, please make a suggestion to me or Pat Hawes (*cem@iucn.org*) so that we can put it on the SC agenda.

From the Thematic Groups

- All Thematic Group Leaders (and RVCs too) have been asked to provide a plan of work for the period until the end of 2010. These programmes will be important input for the oncoming steering committee meeting in Mongolia.

From the Regions

- Debóra Calheiros, an active CEM member from Brazil (debora@cpap.embrapa.br), organised a workshop on the management of the ecosystems of the Rio Mirainda River Basin in the Pantanal.
- My wife and I visited Japan on an invitation of Prof. Shoichi Kawano, our Regional Vice Chair for North-East Asia. Prof. Kawano had made an excellent programme which included opportunities for exchange with the Government, with NGOs and with the press. We were asked to comment upon a number of sensitive issues on ecosystem management on the southern island of Okinawa. We were quite surprised to notice the destruction of the last rich forests in the northern part of the island. Ecologically speaking it was a disaster and economically it did not make sense destroying a high value forest for a low-value product. This leaves a political decision as an explanation for the destruction, but even there we wondered how important the relative small number of forest and construction workers are compared to the large Okinawa population and the important number of tourists that benefit from the delivery of ecosystem services like clear water or the potential for recreation and ecotourism.
  Another key-ecosystem threatened by human activities like forest exploitation and reclaiming parts of the coastal wetlands are the coral reefs surrounding the island. Sedimentation from construction work and run-off from deforested areas affect the viability of these ecosystems which are among the world's most threatened ones as a consequence of climate change.
  We also visited the Chubu Sangaku National Park and the city of Kyoto on the main Island of Honshu. More information will be in our mission report that will be published on the web-site.

General IUCN matters

- The financial crisis is seriously affecting IUCN and the Director General has to make some very difficult decisions which may affect the presence of IUCN in certain regions. It is important to outline that when such a case happens, IUCN does not leave the region entirely. Commissions are always there, and their members should be ready to signal their presence to the other actors in the field of conservation and development. The Regional Office for Europe is now under scrutiny, and I am pleased to notice that CEM-members from that region have argued that we need a strong presence in the capital of Europe.