

Since the first World Conservation Congress (in 1996 in Montreal), the IUCN membership has consistently asked for more involvement of IUCN with the private sector. The Mining Sector is undoubtedly one with many activities with high impacts on biodiversity, and on ecosystems in particular. There is no reason to idealise the situation around mining and conservation, and conflicts between these continue to appear. Within this context I think that IUCN is in an excellent position to defend the interests of nature, and to realise substantial gains for its conservation when dealing with those representatives of the private sector that are seriously willing to give conservation its rightful place in their operations, to the benefit of biodiversity and of mankind. I am therefore pleased that IUCN will be signing an agreement of collaboration with Rio Tinto, as this multinational mining company has shown itself to be quite willing to invest in the improvement of its environmental practices, with substantial actual and potential gains for the delivery of ecosystem products and services, compared to business as usual elsewhere in the mining sector. Large scale mining is so much at the ecosystem level that I expect our Commission to be called upon frequently to contribute to the realisation of the objectives of this agreement.

CEM matters:

The holiday season is approaching, at least here in Europe, but that does not mean that it is time to relax. On the contrary, members of volunteer networks like our Commission do find time now to address issues that they feel have been postponed too long, and we receive many invitations to participate in IUCN and CEM related activities. I myself have planned to attend a meeting in Gland where future collaboration between IUCN and the ICMM¹ is on the agenda; I hope to attend the opening of the IUCN Brazil office and to meet some of our Latin American members; and in September I will be in Mongolia to attend the steppe conference that CEM is co-organising with the Hustai National Park Trust, of which I am a board member. For more information about this last conference, you may contact Mrs. Marja van Staalduinen (marjavs@xs4all.nl)

From the Thematic Groups

Gradually the number of co-leads increases. Alexander Fröde has agreed to be the co-lead for the Climate Change Adaptation Thematic Group; David Levy will be joining Eros Arturo for the Ecosystems and the Private Sector Theme and Alvin Chandra will be co-lead for the Island group; there will be more to follow. We have decided to merge the ‘Mangroves, coral reefs, seas grass connectivity’ group with the ‘Australian Marine Specialist Advisory Group.’ The new group will be entitled ‘Coastal Ecosystems Group’ and Richard Kenchington (richard.kenchington@netspeed.com.au) is lead.

Dolf de Groot has been invited to participate in a major EU-funded conference on biodiversity to prepare a “Statement on Planning for Ecosystem Services”.

From the Regions

We analysed the membership in the different regions and noticed that in a number of regions the membership was (far) too small to be expected to deliver a solid CEM-programme. The RVCs of those regions will receive shortly a mailing from Pat Hawes inviting them to increase the membership in their region in order to be able to come forward with a CEM programme that can actually be implemented by that membership.

After my visit to Mongolia, I plan to come over to China where I am invited by our focal point Dr. Yu Xiubo, to give a presentation to a number of Chinese scientists. Of course I also plan to see our Thematic Group Leader on Urban Ecosystems, Prof. Li Feng, and to meet the IUCN councilor from China Prof Keping Ma.

The Regional Office of IUCN for the Mediterranean will celebrate its 10th anniversary this year.

CEM member Marja van Staalduinen has taken the initiative to organise a seminar on the conservation of steppe ecosystems in Spain and the role of pastoralism therein. She has received enthusiastic reactions from such different target groups as local authorities, traditional herding communities and scientists. Marja hopes to get it all organised towards the end of this year.

In Mauritania the 4th forum of the PRCM took place, in which many of our West African members participated. Our Director General attended part of the event and was impressed by the ambiance in which this get-together of all major stakeholders of the West African Coastal and Marine Ecosystems took place.

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• ¹ International Council on Mining and Metals