

**IUCN  
WORLD CONSERVATION CONGRESS  
5–14 October 2008, Barcelona, Spain**

**Report to Congress on the work of the IUCN Council's  
One Programme Working Group (Version 30 June 2008)**

**Action Requested:** The World Conservation Congress is asked to TAKE NOTE of the latest report of the IUCN Council's One Programme Working Group, as referenced in Motion CGR4.MOT001.

### **Background**

Following receipt of the Global Survey of IUCN Members and subsequently, the Recommendations of the 2007 External Review, Council at its 68<sup>th</sup> meeting in November 2007, established two working groups. The first of these was to look at how the IUCN Programme could really become the "One Programme" of the members, Commissions and Secretariat, as had been called for at previous Congresses, but had evidently not yet fully happened. The second was to look at the results of the Survey of IUCN Members and to make appropriate recommendations to improve member satisfaction. Because the two groups had a large overlap in the Councillors serving on them and because of the limited timeline to progress their work, these groups were shortly afterwards merged into one group.

The Working Group reported to the 69<sup>th</sup> meeting of Council in March 2008, which requested that a background paper be submitted to the Barcelona Congress so that members are made aware of its work; and also that the Working Group submit a resolution to the Congress to further the recommendations in its background paper.

This work is very much work in progress and it is hoped that discussion at Congress of this paper and of the accompanying Resolution, will allow the membership a voice on these important issues and from this discussion, provide guidance to the incoming Council as to how to take this work forward.

### **Setting the Context**

The Global Survey of IUCN Members and the draft recommendations of the 2007 External Review confirm that members and partners believe in the concept and mission of IUCN and reaffirm its importance in today's world. However, they also indicate that significant changes are needed for the organization to meet the expectations of its members and to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world. It is clear from these reviews that members do not have a sense of ownership of IUCN's Programme and do not feel that they have the tools and support to allow them to build from the local, regional to global level.

There is need for more clarity with regard to *what* IUCN wants to be in the global community – its role, purpose and objectives – and *how* it will organize itself to deliver its mission. Linked to this is a need for greater clarity on roles, responsibilities and expectations within IUCN and, as some have put it, a need for the Union to develop a clear social contract amongst the three pillars (members, Commissions and Secretariat). Moreover, expectations need to be clear and well managed at all levels.

IUCN, as one of the largest global environmental organizations should be better known. One reason that it is not better known is its relative failure to date to get its members (who are active worldwide at the grass roots, in nearly every language and culture) really engaged with its Programme and work.

IUCN's Value Proposition (see IUCN's 2020 Vision) asserts that our unique three pillar structure – Members, Commissions and Secretariat – provides the opportunity for IUCN to have a broader and

deeper influence, but this will only be realized if we can find ways for the three pillars to work in a more coordinated and mutually supportive fashion.

The IUCN Programme should be the totality of activities undertaken by the IUCN Secretariat, Commissions and other networks with and on behalf of the Union's members, supporters and partners. This "joined-up" programme has become known as the "One Programme". However, delivering this has fallen short of expectations, because culturally we have not learnt to operate as a Union. If we are to do better in the next four years, we need to change this. Not only does the IUCN Programme need to be realistic, results-based and focused on delivering our value proposition, but we also need to change our modus operandi, so that the Programme is delivered through using our unique combination of professional staff, Government and NGO members, and Commission volunteers.

This will not be easy, since not all members or Commissions are the same, nor do they necessarily have similar expectations: We have Government and NGO members, big and small members, members from richer and poorer regions (both in terms of wealth and biodiversity), and members interested in policy, science, education, projects, etc., to highlight just some of the differences. But the fact that these differences exist, emphatically must not be used as a reason not to take action to involve members, but rather means that we must recognise individual expectations and customize solutions to satisfy, insofar as possible, the different needs of different members.

The time is right to commence a process of re-invigorating IUCN to realize the strengths of its unique structure, building on the ongoing change management processes. The objective will be to re-establish members and Commissions at the centre of the work of the Union, with the role of the third pillar, the Secretariat, being to work with, connect, facilitate and add value to the members and Commissions, to work on their behalf. The task of involving members and Commissions will be easier where the themes of the Programme intersect with their existing interests. This will require the Secretariat to gather information about what thematic areas members are presently working in, for how long, and to what extent, and what their hopes are for future involvement with IUCN in that area. The change process to achieve this will take time and require changes in individual attitudes and organizational culture if it is to be done well and if it is to stick within the organization. It will also require members and Commissions to deliver where they have accepted responsibilities to do so.

## **Improving IUCN's Planning Systems and Processes**

IUCN's planning systems and processes are confusing, not sequenced logically and are in need of improvement. Furthermore, a gap exists between IUCN's strategic intentions and member expectations on the one hand and Secretariat capacities and priorities on the other. There is a need to rationalize the planning systems and associated processes into fewer, more coherent steps that are clearly inter-linked. Recognising that IUCN's programmatic results are not easily realized over a period of only four years, it was felt that the planning system must incorporate this reality. While noting that Statutes required a Programme and Commission mandates to be adopted by Congress, there is no stipulation on how these should be presented.

1. It was recommended that a more robust planning structure be adopted as follows:
  - A long-term vision be formulated that sets out at the high level the direction IUCN intends to take in achieving its mission. This needs to be built through a participatory process from the local and regional level up to the global level with members and Commissions fully integrated in the process from the start. National and Regional Committees have an important role to play in this process. It is envisaged that this document, once approved by Congress, should only re-presented to Congress as and when necessary.
  - A mid-term strategy (around 12 years or three intersessional periods) should be prepared outlining the organizational objectives and general programmatic directions to deliver the long-term vision. This should include IUCN's programmatic focus and accompanying Commission mandates, building on the unique characteristics of its value proposition and addressing members' priorities. This plan should articulate *what* IUCN will deliver over the medium term, *how* it intends to deliver it and how it will *report* on it. It is envisaged that this document would be reviewed before each Congress taking into account the views of members and

Commissions, but would only require relatively minor amendments to reflect any relevant changes in the world.

- The mid-term strategy should then have an operational four-year (intersessional) programme and operational plan (in this document, the Programme and its Operational Plan are just referred to as “the Programme”), setting out what the Union (its Secretariat and Commissions, with assistance from members as appropriate) will deliver in the 4-year intersessional period, as a contribution to achieving the mid-term results:

The intention of this structure is to avoid a costly and unnecessary revision of all planning details and Commission mandates every four years, which is unnecessary, but at the same time to be clear on what deliverables are expected during the four-year period. This three-part process would provide a clear and unifying planning process for the Union and the participation by members and Commissions in the process, followed by adoption by each Congress of the (updated as necessary) mid-term strategy and new four-year programme, would increase ownership and simplify planning, as well as meet statutory requirements (since it would contain both the programme and the mandates).

### **Unifying all the Union’s Components behind achieving the Programme – Implementing IUCN’s Value Proposition**

The Working Group believes that the value proposition of IUCN is sound and describes IUCN’s special characteristics, and it also believes that IUCN needs to make significant changes to the way it currently operates in order that the value proposition becomes a living reality. In future IUCN must be structured, managed and resourced appropriately to function as a networked organization in support of its members and Commissions.

Achieving the unique potential of the Union should underpin a new social contract between all actors in the IUCN family. This new social contract must be designed to maximize the potential strengths of IUCN’s three pillar structure (Members, Commissions and Secretariat).

To deliver IUCN’s true power there is a need for far-reaching adjustments to the organizational model. In particular, the Secretariat needs to engage members and Commissions in consultative processes when developing policy positions, in advocacy of these positions at national level and in the formulation and delivery of projects. The Secretariat’s role should be as a convener and supporter to assist and promote the achievement of the programme through working with and on behalf of the members and Commissions.

It is recommended that:

2. The Director General, with the clear support of Council, should:

- Build on and publicise existing good examples of staff working with members and Commissions.
- Require all Secretariat staff, as a crucial part of their work, to involve members and Commissions in policy formulation and advocacy and in the formulation and delivery of projects.
- Engage in a deliberate process that adjusts the Secretariat organization and institutional culture to deliver the programme and value proposition in a way that emphasises the roles of members and Commissions.
- Review on a regular basis, the Secretariat’s performance at all levels in relation to its relevance, effectiveness and efficiency in working with members and Commissions to deliver the mid-term strategy and the operational plan, and as a result, identify and make any changes necessary to improve that performance.
- Revise incentive and accountability measures within the Secretariat to focus on the need: to engage and support members and Commissions; to provide multiple entry points (including the regions, all of the global thematic programmes, communications, fundraising, operations,

etc.); and to deliver agreed results and financial viability (rather than the current emphasis solely on ensuring financial viability).

- Adopt staffing policies that include clearly defined staff Terms of Reference and performance and evaluation criteria that emphasise actively engaging all constituencies of the Union.
- Develop, where necessary, effective social contracts with various components of IUCN (but noting that developing a collaborative and trusting organizational culture will be much more important than words on paper).

## **Resources and Funding Model**

The largest proportion of IUCN's income is from projects, which are used to directly deliver programme results and feed cost recovery back for the running of the Secretariat. Feedback suggests that the project model used by IUCN is considered by many to fall short in terms of delivering the real value of IUCN (particularly in terms of engaging networks of members and Commission members) while at the same time, it requires the Secretariat to have extensive staff, project offices and associated management systems to deliver against contractual obligations. The current funding model makes the Secretariat look and behave in a similar manner to any other project management consultancy firm and marginalizes, or even competes for resources with, the Commissions and members, particularly at the national level. In some cases, it very likely drives some of the dissatisfaction expressed in the Membership Survey.

Improving the funding model requires changes to the way in which projects are designed and implemented. It is not an issue of whether or not IUCN should run projects, but about the type of projects it runs and also how it designs and implements these projects so that programmatic results are built on the unique strengths of IUCN (i.e. by emphasising networking, convening, technical guidance on demand and the engagement of members and Commissions).

To improve the funding model it is necessary to understand that the ways in which donors provide funds is normally beyond IUCN's control, but IUCN can control the type of funds it seeks from donors and the purposes to which it applies funds where some flexibility in use is possible. Focusing on projects that ensure the Commissions and members are supported and engaged effectively in delivering IUCN's mission must be considered as a fundamental fundraising principle, reflecting IUCN's value proposition. The amount and use of IUCN's core income has a major influence on the ability of the Union to deliver its mission and programme results.

To make changes to the overall funding model of IUCN, it will be necessary to resource the change processes needed. In particular, to make working with Commissions and members the Secretariat's normal way of working, will require that significant resources are earmarked in the budget to promote appropriate initiatives and to develop new skills and competencies where needed. Assuming sufficient resources are currently not readily available to better work with members and better fund the Commissions, the Director General will need to make the resources available either by securing funding from new sources, reallocating existing resources (financial and human) or by making cuts in other budget lines as necessary, as well as finding ways to achieve this without incurring significant costs. This process is crucial to reinforcing IUCN as a Union with three pillars and thus should be accorded the highest priority of Council and the Director General.

Noting that budget is needed to implement the short-term change and also over the long term to ensure that the new way of operating is supported and functions well.

3. It is recommended that the Director General should:

- Adjust the budget process to ensure that the use of framework and other general or un-earmarked funds are prioritized towards initiatives that are using Commissions and members in the delivery of agreed programmatic results.
- Prioritize budget and human resources to make delivering the Programme through working with Commissions and members the Secretariat's normal way of working, with the 2009 budget being drafted with this as the central and most important consideration.

- Market to donors, both the 2009–2012 Programme and IUCN's commitment to its value proposition, in an effort to secure more core support and encourage donors to provide support that builds on IUCN's unique attributes which enable a major impact from local to global level.
- Ensure that except in exceptional circumstances, only projects focusing on delivery of agreed programme results through the effective engagement of Commissions and members are given approval. To achieve this, members and Commissions should be invited to work with the Secretariat to implement projects. The project review and approval process must be revised and there should be negotiation with donors to encourage them to invest in IUCN through the appropriate type of projects (e.g. those playing to supporting our relative institutional strengths and enabling us to use them to maximize conservation outcomes/impact).

## **Communications**

There is a need for clear, continuous and consistent communication to all actors within and related to IUCN, using all available communication tools. All surveys and reviews have shown that IUCN could be better organized to support the strengths inherent in a networked organization. There is an urgent need to enhance tools for dissemination of information on the available skills, expertise and interests housed in the Commissions and members. IUCN's Councillors and staff need to be able to clearly state what the benefit is to an organization of joining IUCN and ensure that benefit is delivered.

4. It is recommended that:

- The Council and the Director General should give more attention to what is communicated and how to communicate with internal and external audiences, taking advantage of emerging communication tools and technologies.
- The Director General should examine the usefulness of the Commission Registration as a tool and urgently look at modern management information systems to facilitate the easy capture, keeping up to date and making available of information on expertise within the Secretariat, Commissions and membership.
- The Secretariat in a user-friendly way, report to members on progress in implementation of the Programme, giving case examples of successful implementation by members and/or Commissions.
- The Director General work with Regional Offices, National and Regional Committees to develop increased visibility of IUCN at a regional level.
- The Director General calls on the Commission on Education and Communication's expertise to assist IUCN in meeting its communication challenges.

## **Governance and Accountability**

It is essential that clear processes for IUCN to involve members and Commissions are given increased attention. As one means of delivering this, the full potential of IUCN's structures, in particular of National and Regional Committees, needs to be better utilized. Making these structures work needs to be given higher attention by Council and the Director General.

5. It is recommended that:

- The Director General should work with Regional and out-posted offices and members to: a) promote the establishment of national and regional committees where none exist, b) implement the governance changes approved at the Bangkok World Conservation Congress to enable the empowerment of regional and national committees, and c) build synergies with the Commissions and members and demonstrate intent to involve them at every opportunity.
- The Director General should ensure the establishment of transparent and measurable criteria and participatory mechanisms for involving members and Commissions in the One

Programme in unison with the Secretariat for the best possible conservation outcome.

- Regional Directors ensure that each Regional Committee is fully involved in the elaboration and delivery of the Programme and policy of the Union and is given the opportunity to build a regional vision through a consultative process with National Committees and members.
- The Secretariat further develop its participatory mechanisms and tools, including possibly the use of wikis if appropriate, to enable the better involvement of members and Commissions in the development and implementation of the Programme and formulation of policies of the Union.
- The Secretariat, in implementing the Programme, develops its knowledge of who the major stakeholders are within the Union's components working within each programmatic area (including on policy) and takes appropriate steps to network with those stakeholders. This will require members and Commission members to respond in a timely and responsible manner.

It is equally important that members and Commissions, when they commit themselves to undertaking a task that they have accepted on behalf of IUCN, act responsibly and accept full accountability for carrying out the work to the required standard and agreed criteria. This is particularly essential where IUCN's reputation or financial transactions are concerned.

6. It is recommended that:

- The Director General should develop a clear and simple contractual document for signature by relevant parties, which sets out the obligations on member organizations and/or Commission members and on the Secretariat when undertaking an agreed task on behalf of the Secretariat.

## **Organizational Culture of IUCN**

None of the above changes will happen without the energy and support of individuals. IUCN has an over-reliance on words on paper, but it is humans, in the way they conduct themselves, that really make or break a union. There are already many good examples of the staff, members and Commissions working well together, but this is not universal. There needs to be a cultural imperative in IUCN to emphasise togetherness and the common goals of all three components of the Union.

This will in some cases require different skills and a different mindset, particularly amongst Secretariat staff who will need to derive satisfaction in delivering programme goals through bringing together our unique combination of professional staff, Government and NGO members, and Commission volunteers.

This social contract needs to live in the heart of those involved if we are to make the value proposition a reality. The ideal is for staff to lead, but not to compete with or confront, the membership and Commissions.

The key is for management to unambiguously signal that joint working will happen (see Leadership below); to select staff who enjoy and are skilled in this way of working; and to set budgetary incentives to reward appropriate behaviour (see Resources and Funding Model above). Finally, management needs to give its full attention to ensuring the changes really happen.

7. It is recommended that:

- The Director General should make involving members and Commissions in IUCN's work an important goal to be achieved by all staff and its assessment part of the annual appraisal process.
- In responding to opportunities to participate, members and Commissions need to react within appropriate timescales and in a manner that builds trust and collaboration.

## Leadership

To make the required changes will call for strong leadership by Council, Commission Chairpersons, the Director General and all senior managers, all of whom will need to commit to the changes envisaged and to speak with one positive voice in support of them.

8. It is recommended that:

- The Council and the Director General issue a joint inspirational statement to Congress on the purpose and direction of change. The statement should note that the change is based on addressing issues raised by the members in the Membership Survey, the Commissions, the External Review and elsewhere.
- Council members should inform their constituencies of these new directions and report feedback from the members and Commissions, as well as from National and Regional Committees to Council and the Director General.

## Council's Role to ensure Implementation of the Recommendations

The change process needs to be led by Council, supported by the Director General and senior management, and supported by measures that recognise and encourage all relevant actors to adopt the changes required. It should recognise that the staff, members and Commissions are diverse in their circumstances, expectations and capacities and that a diversity of approaches will therefore be appropriate. All concerned must be clearly committed to achieving the objective but flexible as to the means. The processes and the results should be well communicated as well as transparent.

Performance and accountability review systems should be improved at all levels. Council should set up a more effective mechanism to monitor annual progress on the implementation of and involvement of members and Commission members in the Programme (the *who*, the *what* and the *how*). The external review should equally focus on the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the Programme (again the *who*, *what* and *how*) and should not review the Commissions, Secretariat or membership separately, but rather review their effectiveness at contributing together, in unison, to deliver the Programme.

9. To achieve this, it is recommended that the next Council should:

- Request a report to each meeting of Council on successes and difficulties in involving members and the Commissions in the implementation of the Programme (the *who*, the *what* and the *how*). Commissions, as well as National and Regional Committees, might be invited to contribute to such feedback.

Prepare an annual report for the Commissions and members on progress to implement the recommendations in this paper.

- Request the Director General and the Commission Chairs to establish and maintain an effective, standing mechanism to strengthen collaboration between staff and Commissions and their members, identify and resolve any issues that arise in practice which are inhibiting progress in the joint delivery of the Programme and to report to each Council meeting on the operation of this mechanism.
- Request the Commission Chairs to ensure that mechanisms are in place to keep the Secretariat and members informed about their Commission's initiatives and projects.
- Give absolute priority in the 2009 budget, if necessary by reallocating existing resources (financial and human) or by making cuts in other budget lines, to ensuring that sufficient resources are available to achieve the objective of involving members and Commissions more closely in operationalizing the Programme, and to reward appropriate behaviour and develop new skills and competencies where needed.

- Request the four-yearly external review to focus on the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Commissions, Secretariat and membership's work and contribution to the achievement of the Programme.