IUCN
The World Conservation Union

The Future of Sustainability: Have Your Say!

Summary of the IUCN E-Discussion Forum 2006

Edited by Sally Jeanrenaud
Coordinator, The Future of Sustainability Initiative

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Summary

IUCN hosted an e-discussion forum entitled **The Future of Sustainability: Have Your Say!** in the autumn of 2006. This had 460 registered participants from over 70 countries and generated over 200 pages of comments.

The e-discussion was based on key themes derived from a report written by Professor William Adams entitled: *The Future of Sustainability: Rethinking Environment and Development in the Twenty-first Century*, published by IUCN in 2006.

Each week of the forum focused on a different theme and was joined by a guest blogger, who provided a short introductory text and comments during the week. The four themes were:

Global Challenges to Sustainability in the Twenty-First Century, which explored the major environmental and social problems of our era as well as innovations in the sustainability sciences.

Human Wellbeing and Sustainability, which looked at the role of conservation in poverty reduction as well as highlighting the problem of 'affluenza' and unsustainable consumption in industrialized economies.

The New Economy and Biodiversity, which examined the issue of emerging economies, the role of the market, trade and the private sector as levers for sustainability, as well as new economic and business models.

Shaping the Future, which explored the role of new media and communications, and investigated opportunities for engaging social movements and the next generation in advancing sustainability.

The discussion captured many challenges and innovations for a sustainable future.

Participants critiqued the traditional three-pillar model of sustainable development and referred to new models which conceptualize ecosystems as the foundation stone or life support systems of the economy and society. They noted how the concept of sustainable development had been hijacked and politicized, and stressed the importance of moving beyond concepts to supporting real communities implementing sustainable development on the ground. The discussion referred to innovations in 'sustainability sciences', and new understandings of cultural and biodiversity for resilient societies, and called for a better dialogue between science and citizens in the 21st century.

Contributors drew attention to poverty and environment linkages, power dynamics and the processes whereby poor rural people are marginalized from resources. The discussion highlighted social justice issues, political ecological frameworks and called for the inclusion of rights-based approaches in conservation work. It called for innovations in governance and accountability models for sustainability, and for agencies to tackle the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and for deeper systemic transformation of the global economy.

The discussion explored the challenges of consumer-based development, issues of material values, affluenza and unsustainable consumption. It called for more attention to 'consumer demand' issues as well as 'impact' issues, and for rethinking the 'good life' and new measures of health and happiness as an integral part of a sustainable future.

Participants discussed prevailing development and economic pathways, pointing to the patterns of trade, financial flows, and subsidies which undermine livelihoods and destroy resources. They called for new markets and tools which value ecosystem goods and services. They touched on new business models which integrate social and environmental values, and referred to new technologies and solutions inspired by nature.

Participants criticized the conservation and environmental movement for its obsolete language, 'doom and gloom' narratives and for preaching to the converted for too long. Participants urged agencies to reach out to new audiences, particularly the youth, through new interactive media. They called for new alliances with the social movement in order to create a tipping point for sustainability. Contributors referred to the importance of education and learning for sustainability but also emphasized the need for action and practical solutions.

The e-discussion forum is an element of the IUCN Future of Sustainability Initiative which is reviewing a new generation of sustainability thinking and practice some twenty years after the Brundtland Report popularized the well-known definition of sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".[1] In collaboration with members and partners, IUCN's Future of Sustainability Initiative is helping pave the way for a new vision and the next step change for the environmental community.

[1] The World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). *Our Common Future*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

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1. Background

The IUCN 2006 E-Discussion Forum

IUCN hosted an Electronic Discussion Forum for its Members, Commissions, Staff and the public at large between August and September 2006.[2] The e-discussion forum is one element of the IUCN Future of Sustainability Initiative (see below).

The forum aimed to encourage critical reflection and dialogue on an IUCN background report compiled by Professor William Adams entitled *The Future of Sustainability: Rethinking Environment and Development in the Twenty-first Century*.[3]

Each week of the forum focused on a different theme and was joined by a guest blogger, who provided a short introductory text and comments during the week. The four themes were:

- *Global Challenges to Sustainability in the Twenty-First Century*. This explored the major environmental and social problems of our era as well as innovations in the sustainability sciences, and was joined by Mr Jeffrey McNeely from Switzerland.
- *Human Wellbeing and Sustainability*. This looked at the role of conservation in poverty reduction as well as highlighting the problem of 'affluenza' and unsustainable consumption in industrialized economies, and was joined by Dr Ashok Khosla from India.
- *The New Economy and Biodiversity*. This examined the issue of emerging economies, the role of the market, trade and the private sector as levers for sustainability, as well as new economic and business models, and was joined by Dr Lu Zhi from China.
- *Shaping the Future*. This explored the role of new media and communications, and investigated opportunities for engaging social movements and the next generation in advancing sustainability, and was joined by Mr Rubens Born from Brazil.

The e-Forum had over 460 registered participants from over 70 countries, and generated about 200 pages of comments. It facilitated worldwide exchange on a wide range of topics, highlighting challenges as well as innovations for a sustainable future. For details and access to all the contributions please see www.iucn.org/members/future_sustainability/.

This report represents a selection of voices from around the world, and should not be considered an exhaustive list of challenges and innovations in the wider sustainability debate. The report assumes a general knowledge of wider sustainability issues.

The IUCN Future of Sustainability Initiative

Is the concept of sustainable development out-of-date? Are conservation and environmental organizations failing to make progress on major environmental challenges? Where are the major innovations for sustainability coming from? How can the conservation and environmental community raise its game to shape the 21st century?

Prompted by these and similar questions, the President and Council members of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) launched an initiative entitled the "Future of Sustainability" in 2006. Its objective is "to review the conceptualization of conservation and sustainable development as it stands today, and to help set direction of the evolution of the field and serve as a clarion call for the Union, the environmental movement and society at large."[4]

While this may sound an ambitious goal it actually builds on the strengths and traditions of the Union. Founded in 1948 it is one of the oldest international environmental organizations in the world. As a Union of more than one thousand member organizations in one hundred and forty countries, and over ten thousand voluntary scientists in six Commissions, it has played a leading role in shaping new eras of sustainable development policy and practice for almost sixty years.[5]

The history of the concept of sustainable development itself is well documented as it has evolved from its first iterations in the 1970s to the well-known definition, framed by the Brundtland Commission in 1987, of "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".[6] What is less well known is that the *World Conservation*

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2 See www.iucn.org/members/future_sustainability

3 Adams, W. (2006). *The Future of Sustainability: Rethinking Environment and Development in the Twenty-first Century*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

4 The 63rd IUCN Council 2006. Decision C/63/16.

5 For more information on the World Conservation Union see www.iucn.org

6 See footnote 1.

Strategy, published by IUCN, UNEP and WWF, provided one of the first definitions, an intellectual framework and practical guidance for intergenerational sustainable development back in 1980.[7] This was followed by *Caring for the Earth: A strategy for sustainable living*, published by the same organizations in 1991.

The current IUCN initiative provides a timely review of a new generation of sustainability thinking, and prepares the ground for a new vision and agenda of action for conservation and environment organizations.

A global and regional process

IUCN is drawing upon its global membership structure and new advances in interactive media and communications in its review process.

As a first step, the Union convened an international meeting of prominent thinkers in 2006 which reviewed society's progress towards sustainability and the main challenges facing humanity at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This generated a base document written by Professor William Adams, from the University of Cambridge, UK, entitled *The Future of Sustainability: Rethinking Environment and Development in the Twenty-first Century*, available in French, Spanish and Arabic.[8] This report bridges the human and environmental agendas, and lays out a number of options for the future evolution of the environment and development field.

The Union subsequently hosted a global e-discussion on the main themes of this report in 2006, for all its Members, Commissions, staff as well as the general public – the subject of this document.

The ideas generated through these on-going discussions are currently being shared with and enriched by IUCN members through a series of regional consultations in 2007 which will help integrate local and regional perspectives into a new era of sustainability thinking and practice.

A further e-forum and competition for young people is being planned in collaboration with WWF International and a mobile phone company in 2008. This will enable young people to post messages, photos and short video clips on the state of the planet. Winners will be brought to the IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2008 to present their messages to world leaders.

A further global meeting with business leaders and sustainability experts, to be held early in 2008, will help consolidate these discussions and frame the next step-change for the conservation community in rising to the challenges of the twenty-first century. This will generate inputs for a Challenge and Innovations Paper which will be debated at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2008 in Barcelona, and will help inform a new vision and agenda for action for the environmental community.

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7 IUCN, UNEP, WWF. (1980). *World Conservation Strategy. Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

8 Adams, W.M. (2006). *The Future of Sustainability: Rethinking Environment and Development in the Twenty-first Century*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

2. The Concept of Sustainable Development

The concept and models of sustainable development were widely critiqued and generated debate on whether the concept itself was tired and overworked and should be abandoned, or reworked and fixed.

Critique of the three-pillar model

The three-pillar model of sustainable development (SD) has long been a subject of debate among analysts, on the grounds that it encourages the notion that trade-offs between the three dimensions is acceptable. This view was strongly endorsed by one contributor:

"It is an obvious nonsense to have 'pillar equivalence' (and indeed its technical corollary, total capital substitution) between social, environmental, economic aspects of SD. So obviously a hierarchy, or concentric circle, version of the three-fold structure is required….I think this point can be reinforced however if we clarify that the economy is not an end in itself, nor is the extraction of environmental resources: to consider the economy as a 'pillar' implies that it has some substantive nature beyond providing welfare, and this is not the case. The reification of abstract institutions (markets) and indices (money/GDP growth) has clearly got out of hand, and correcting this is a more profound job than merely sequencing the 'pillars'". (UK)[9]

There was a concern that the sustainable development discussion seems to have lost something of its sharp edge from an ecological perspective. To one contributor the environmental sciences need to be recentred in the debate if the concept of sustainable development is to remain credible:

"My strongest concern…is the continued use of the term 'sustainability' without any qualifiers….IUCN should regularly use the terms 'environmental sustainability' and 'environmentally sustainable development' or even better 'environmentally sustainable livelihoods'". (USA)[10]

The discourse of sustainable development

Other participants noted that the concept and its terminology had been hijacked by those in power to serve their own needs, suggesting that the language of sustainable development had become devalued:

"…the noble notion of sustainability…. [can] not be challenged. But in practice the terms 'sustainability', 'eco-sustainable', 'sustainable development', 'sustainable use', 'sustainable harvesting' are being misused…and politicized by vested interests: the 'haves' whether at global level or at village level are interpreting these terms in order to continue to sustain their control over the 'have nots'…. Like notions of liberty, democracy, justice, the term sustainability is now a word of convenience….". (Pakistan)[11]

To some participants the point was not to try and redefine the discourse or change the language, but to use the concept to inspire the development of new communities who are trying to implement sustainable development on the ground:

"……The future of sustainability lies not in redefining it, but making it the underpinnings of the social movements and in developing communities of practice, especially focusing on empowerment of people through ownership rights to the poor, decentralized governance in fragile ecosystems and investments in capacity building of local level community based participatory institutions." (Pakistan)

Some agreed that terms and concepts are adopted by a broad variety of actors, some of them with diametrically opposing interests. The challenge is to adapt the concept to local needs:

"In practice the concept means different things to different people. We are not only talking about different interests but also about different perceptions of concepts….The biggest challenge is to adapt the concept of sustainable development to [local] conditions of poverty, environmental degradation and scarcity of resources….and help [communities] develop their own definition of sustainable development in order to provide them with elements that could be useful to their work…". (Mexico)[12]

Alternative framings of sustainability

The traditional concepts of sustainability and sustainable development do not appeal to everyone. Some contributors wanted to capture new meanings and dimensions and proposed alternative framings:

"Sustainable life" which includes humans as well as

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9 Comments on Background Document, No. 3.

10 Comments on Background Paper, No. 2.

11 Week 2, No. 9.

12 Week 2, No. 30.

other lifeforms. Life is considered a word people can understand and identify with. (Greece)[13]

"Sustainable wealth and life" which emphasizes how common wellbeing enriches individual wellbeing. (Costa Rica)[14]

"Life horizon" which also implied a new dimension of social sciences which need to evolve to incorporate understanding of sustainability issues. (Algeria)[15]

Keep it but fix it!

Several contributors agreed that sustainable development is now a well-known 'brand' and that despite its problems the most effective strategy is to re-orientate the concept, re-emphasize what it means and move forwards: a strategy of 'keep it but fix it'. But in order to do this:

"systematics are required on one level, and sheer salesmanship and presentation on another".[16]

13 Week 1, No. 55.

14 Week 4, No. 36.

15 Week 4, No. 30.

16 Comments on Background Paper, No. 3.

3. The State of the World and the Role of Science

Challenges to sustainability in the 21st century

Most contributors agreed with the references to the global challenges to sustainability in the 21st century outlined in the first week of the forum, including the degradation of ecosystems, species loss, population dynamics, energy-intensive agriculture, poverty, climate change, modern warfare.

There were some notable additions to the challenges outlined, including fresh water shortages, depletion of marine resources, the impact of alien invasive species (USA),[17] unsustainable consumption, market and public policy failures (Australia),[18] the impact of high-tech wars (Pakistan),[19] and the 'double extinction crisis' of cultural as well as biological diversity:

"There is a need to deter the destruction of the diversity of human creativity expressed in cultures as templates of beliefs, knowledge systems, practices, languages, world views and modes of life that ensure the range of human adaptability and survival and sustainable development systems. Reduced cultural and biological diversity is not only risky in an evolutionary sense, but is also costly in destroying life-support systems." (Colombia)[20]

There was agreement that the ever growing 'litany of woes' pointed to the inextricable links between human and natural systems and underscored the scale and urgency of the challenges that threaten to undermine our life support systems in the first decade of this new century.

The contribution of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) was appreciated as a key initiative that has helped revive the importance of ecological principles and limits. It has provided a breakthrough in the types of knowledge needed for advancing sustainable development.[21]

It was recognized, however, that there remain many uncertainties and areas of dispute within ecosystem science. We simply do not understand the complexities of the inter-relationships between different organisms, and their influence on each other. We seem to ignore as much as we know for both production and sustainability (Canada).[22]

The main challenge will be to provide decision makers with robust economic arguments for maintaining and restoring ecosystem goods and services (more on this later) (Australia).[23]

Others pointed out that the MA gave insufficient consideration to interdisciplinary and intercultural approaches and revealed a weak and piecemeal understanding of the relevance of 'culture' as separate from ecosystems rather than an integral part of them (Colombia).[24]

Science and urgency

There was a sense of frustration that looking to conservation biology and environmental science for breakthroughs would not produce the answers we need, and that change needs to happen faster than science:

"…haven't we all heard about the depressing litany of woes over and over again? And don't we know enough already that we don't need to ask again what the challenges are? …If we procrastinate and wait until we have nutted out all the possible solutions and their potential consequences, well, the deckchairs will still be at the bottom of the ocean along with the good old Titanic…We just need to act on what we already know and change our behaviour. We can think of it as adaptive experimental management and make adjustments as we go". (Australia)[25]

"We have to make statements and initiate actions that the scientific data basis cannot completely endorse. We

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17 Week 1, No. 4.

18 Week 1, No. 18.

19 Week 1, No. 3.

20 Week 1, No. 14.

21 Comments on Background Paper, No. 3. Week 1, No. 18.

22 Week 1, No. 42.

23 Week 1, No. 18.

24 Week 1, No. 50.

25 Week 1, No. 52.

must use a 'compass' approach – 'this direction' – rather than a 'map' approach". (UK)[26]

"…the role of scientists must be to anticipate the facts and to offer alternative solutions". (Bolivia)[27]

However, there was scepticism that IUCN and other organizations could act in this way:

"I don't believe that IUCN and other justification/ research/data-obsessed organizations are prepared to pursue this. At the moment, environmental science is stupendously constipated…we are fixated on 'how much impact' rather than the science and design and economics of optimal alternatives. We are, in effect, squinting at the speedometer while still driving towards the cliff." (UK)[28]

This contributor believes that the science and advocacy community need to learn the principles of overall optimization (rather than specific impact fiddling) in order to really "turn the vehicle around".

Innovations in sustainability science

One contributor recognized what might be called the rise of 'sustainability science' (or systems science), which provides a new, specially developed science base underpinning sustainable development.

Key ideas include: 'critical natural capital' (which some people refer to as ecological economics), 'resilience' and 'political ecology'. These have emerged from a 'sustainability agenda' rather than from classical disciplines. It was predicted that these three new disciplines, although only partially developed, are likely to merge around a shared meta-agenda sometime in the future (UK).[29]

More broadly, participants recognized the importance of linking traditional biological sciences with social and economic sciences, implying:

"…that cooperation among different sciences and institutions could lead to a sort of 'intellectual hybrid vigour' that could contribute substantially to sustainability". (USA)[30]

The democratization of science

Some contributors emphasized that science needs to reinvent ways of relating to society if it is to remain credible. There is a sense of distrust of scientists because of their connections with big business and government, and a feeling of alienation from them in their ivory towers. Without losing its essential properties, it was felt that a new scientific venture needs to be open to ethics and holistic perspectives and encourage a better dialogue between the scientific community, the public and policy makers:

"…we need to construct a bridge between investigation and the population……science needs to become more involved with citizens and generate a dialogue".[31]

As a global Union, IUCN was also urged to broaden its understanding of a 'knowledge-based society' by supporting intercultural science and technology initiatives, and exploring other epistemologies. It was encouraged to seek to create a more equitable and efficient positioning of the Union with regard to knowledge:

"The challenge is not only HOW to ensure that key interest groups define priorities and apply innovative science and technology, but also HOW to ensure the creation of an intercultural scientific and technology endeavour…I think this implies extending the Minimalist or restricted definition of science and technology of the epistemic communities who are engaged in biodiversity, environmental or conservation issues, in order to create a Maximalist definition…which involves research alliances with other experts – indigenous and [others]" who have invaluable scientific and technological expertise in advancing sustainability. (Colombia)[32]

26 Comments on Background Paper, No. 3.

27 Week 1, No. 54.

28 Comments on Background Paper, No. 3.

29 Comments on Background Paper, No. 3.

30 Week 1, No. 8 and 35.

31 Week 1, No. 16.

32 Week 1, No. 50.

4. Human Wellbeing and Sustainability

Poverty and the environment

Social justice issues emerged as a strong theme throughout discussions related to poverty and the environment linkages. However, there were a few participants who thought that environmental sustainability should not be sacrificed in the challenge to create livelihoods:

"…environmental sustainability cannot be lost in the struggle to bring sustainable livelihoods to the world's peoples". (USA)[33]

"…conservationists and development organizations are trying to marry conservation with sustainable development for human wellbeing, but at the cost of environmental and natural resources". (Nepal)[34]

Others drew attention to the huge gulf in understanding which still remains between the objectives of conservation and development organizations, and how important it is to collaborate for a sustainable future:

"In spite of the decade-old poverty-environment-people linkage debate and initiatives, there remains a gulf between mainstream development and conservation sectors in having a shared or even proper understanding in this regard. In general, the development sector in its pursuit of poverty eradication and reducing vulnerability has largely neglected the value of environmental linkages……On the other hand, the conservation sector's initiatives at times ignore livelihood aspects. More often than not livelihoods and community empowerment activities are undertaken for cosmetic purposes or for appeasing donors." (Sri Lanka)[35]

There were mixed views about whether conservation organizations were really playing a meaningful role in poverty reduction, and living up to the values embedded in their new policy narratives. One participant from Nepal drew attention to the damaging effect of conservation on poor peoples' livelihoods, asserting that conservation is causing resource scarcities and exacerbating poverty in rural areas, and asserting that:

"The 'Naked Emperor's New Clothes' metaphor appropriately explains the current practice of poverty alleviation by conservation". (Nepal)[36]

This participant provided data to support the view that conservation is undermining the livelihoods of the most vulnerable groups in the Himalayan regions by reducing the amount of land that could be used to grow food, thus compromising food security in poor areas. The collapse of the traditional economy and loss of common property, as a result of conservation, has increased poverty and generated problems of prostitution, girl trafficking, sale of body organs, and the incidence of HIV Aids.[37]

Not everyone agreed:

"While there have been some omissions on the part of some conservation organizations by focussing more on supporting conservation objectives and allocating less resources for poverty alleviation, I don't think it is fair to characterise such organizations as working against poor people". (Uganda)[38]

This contributor pointed out that the environmental degradation is undermining human wellbeing in developing countries such as Uganda where the majority of people rely on natural resources for their survival, and is threatening the country's 'engine of growth'. He was more hopeful of conservation initiatives that:

"seek to empower poor people to diversify their livelihood opportunities by engaging in different environmentally friendly income-generating activities and off-farm micro enterprises. It promotes sustainable food security and preservation of the natural resource base while contributing to building community self-reliance".

Sceptical contributions are an important reminder to conservation organizations to remain critically aware of their own rhetoric of promoting conservation for poverty reduction, which might be interpreted as 'red washing' by some critics.

Social justice and rights

The Forum strongly profiled political and ecological perspectives on poverty-environment linkages. Participants referred to the influence of power relationships, the underlying political and economic barriers, and the processes by which the 'rich haves' marginalize the 'poor have-nots' from land and resources – from village to global levels:

"…social inequity is the greatest problem facing humanity….[there are two critical issues in the

33 Week 2, No. 1.

34 Week 2, No. 8.

35 Week 1, No. 48.

36 Week 1, No. 29, Week 2, No. 6.

37 Week 2, No. 36.

38 Week 2, No. 33.

debate]…access to ecosystem services and differentiated responsibilities on natural resources degradation…rather than technical difficulties, sustainability faces barriers from powerful political and economic interests". (Colombia)[39]

"The natural state of coastal areas is being rapidly eroded [in Bangladesh]. People often blame poverty for what has happened. But this is not really the case…my view is that rich people are engulfing the poor peoples' income opportunities. The community was not destructive before". (Bangladesh)[40]

There was support for the call for fundamental systemic and structural changes in society for a sustainable future, and suggestions that such change is brought about by rights-based approaches, through democratic political movements rather than technical intervention *per se*. The comments reflect the significance of social justice issues in the wider sustainability debate:

"…we need to understand the 'Political Economy' in order to effectively tackle the poverty-environment nexus. Social justice, inclusion, diversity, and gender awareness need to be invested in much more than in the present scenario. In short, the conservation movement must be driven by the principles of the Rights-Based Approach. For the majority of environmentalists this is all rather Greek, rather 'alien species"'. (Sri Lanka)[41]

"…the future of sustainability lies in… empowerment of people through ownership rights to the poor, decentralized governance in fragile ecosystems and investments in capacity building of local level community- based participatory institutions". (Pakistan)[42]

Cultural and spiritual values

While the role of science in society was acknowledged throughout the forum, there was strong support for the call to embrace cultural and spiritual values in decision making. Participants argued that sustainability is better viewed as a social paradigm, and that a sustainable future will depend upon bringing about a radical transformation in human awareness and consciousness:

"We need rationality, but science is not enough to solve the huge problems humankind faces". (Finland)[43]

"I think sustainability is more related to social awareness which in turn is not so much connected to scientific innovations or economic advancement…I firmly feel that sustainability be considered a social paradigm with a great thrust on awareness and spirituality." (India)[44]

"The human race needs to have an evolutionary leap from materialistic and ego-centric values to eco-centric and more spiritualistic values and belief systems." (Finland)[45]

"Ethical values are the principal factor in social cohesion and, at the same time, the most effective agent of change and transformation. Achieving sustainability will depend ultimately on changes in behavior and lifestyles, changes which will need to be motivated by a shift in values." (USA)[46]

"…can China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh, where the future 'consumers' of the world reside, be motivated to reflect back on their roots, where austerity, self-reliance and giving are the key ethics and values for progress and modernization." (Pakistan)[47]

Footprint and 'affluenza'

It was acknowledged that the unsustainable consumption patterns and footprint of the richest 20% of the world's population is largely responsible for most of world's pollution and degradation of ecosystems. And yet society remains largely uncritical of the prevailing value systems which drive these development pathways:

"It was recently concluded that we would need the resources of six or seven planets to support the current world population at the North American standard." (New Zealand)[48]

"The drive by people of the world to accumulate things is one of the challenges of sustainability." (Bolivia)[49]

Many participants challenged the simplistic connections between material wealth and wellbeing, pointing to the problems of 'affluenza' and social poverty in industrialized economies. There was agreement that measurements of consumption and profits were not always good indicators of happiness and fulfilment:

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39 Week 2, No. 13.

40 Week 2, No. 34.

41 Week 2, No. 17.

42 Week 2, No. 9.

43 Week 1, No. 43.

44 Week 1, No. 5.

45 Week 3, No. 3.

46 Week 1, No. 44 (Quote from UNESCO. (1997). "Educating for a Sustainable Future; A Transdisciplinary Vision for Concerted Action". (EPD-97/CONF.401/CLD.1. November 1997).

47 Week 3, No. 21.

48 Week 3, No. 27.

49 Week 2, No. 32.

"…wealth, measured by GDP, is not necessarily related to wellbeing…We need to reject the idea that acquisition of material goods and power are indicators of wellbeing. Sometimes the reverse is the case, with many affluent societies experiencing social isolation, compared with the lively community interactions which are often found in materially deprived societies." (Australia)[50]

"The definitions of poor and poverty are based primarily on the scale of consumption and not the quality of life…one may have a very high standard of living but a person's quality of life may be very fulfilling and satisfying…the whole concept of development…is unfortunately based on material consumption only by way of abuse of nature." (India)[51]

"While people may compliment us for our latest material acquisition, seldom does anyone compliment us on our sustainable ways (conservative lifestyle)! In this context, Bhutan's Experience of using GNH instead of GDP as an index of wellbeing needs to be studied and expanded with suitable modifications for the rest of the world." (India)[52]

Redefining the good life

As Professor William Adams pointed out in his base-line report, the 'good life' is narrowly defined in economists' terms in the conventional development model. This formulation is increasingly viewed as inadequate and as one which undervalues the role of cultural and social values in human wellbeing. Can a new generation of thinking about 'sustainability' be made the basis of a new understanding of human aspiration and achievement, and a vehicle for helping redefine the good life?

One participant noted that the greatest problem facing humanity is the lack of understanding of what constitutes the 'good life' (Pakistan).[53] Others drew attention to Maslow's famous hierarchy of needs (i.e., self-actualization, esteem, love/belonging, safety and physiological) as a more or less universal set of values that people find important in defining a 'good life' (Netherlands).[54]

While some emphasized goals such as freedom, peace, justice, mutual respect, solidarity and connectivity with other living beings, others highlighted the role of productive environments in generating the basic elements of the good life:

"…a sustainable future challenges us to rethink the 'good life' and develop alternative models of wealth and prosperity….The essential components of a good life are first spiritual fulfilment…a stress on quality and wellbeing …emphasis on the non-material aspects of societal life which emphasize spiritual values such as family, love of sharing, wellbeing of the community, life of contemplation, and sacrifice. Above all, we must learn to live simple and spiritual lives while consuming less and not more. For this the mind-set has to change". (Pakistan)[55]

"…the meaning of human wellbeing and the definition of what is a 'good life' depends on what part of the world one is talking about…However, irrespective of what part of the world, the bottom line for "good life" means being able to easily and sustainably access the basics of life – food, water, shelter, energy, health care, leisure, freedom and security." (Uganda)[56]

"When we talk about overarching concepts like 'good life', or even about development or progress, we would do well to recall what our wisdom traditions have taught for millennia: that moderation produces the greatest advances for human beings. In wealthy countries, we have completely lost sight of this wisdom…". (USA)[57]

50 Week 2, No. 10.

51 Week 3, No. 6.

52 Week 3, No. 6.

53 Week 2, No. 20.

54 Week 2, No. 25.

55 Week 2, No. 20.

56 Week 2, No. 33.

57 Week 2, No. 14.

5. The New Economy and Biodiversity

Reviewing development pathways

There was sustained critique throughout the forum of mainstream economic and development pathways, and calls for a restructuring of the economy, and new economic rationalities:

"…our global civilization is on an economic path that is environmentally unsustainable, a path that is leading us toward economic decline and eventual collapse…China is forcing the world to rethink its economic future".

…Although it is obvious that no society can survive the decline of its environmental support systems, many people are not yet convinced of the need for economic restructuring. But this is changing now that China has eclipsed the United States in the consumption of most basic resources such as grain, meat, coal, steel and meat." (USA)[58]

"Progress towards sustainability will be ineffective unless societies cease to be imprisoned by the prevailing fashion of economic rationalism, through which non-renewable natural resources are converted as rapidly as possible into wastes, regardless of environmental con- sequences." (Australia)[59]

"While elimination of poverty and misery must be a number one priority across the world, endless economic growth is by definition unsustainable and that is the flaw of the capitalist model – which depends on indefinite growth. In the end a steady state economy will have to be developed, and one hopes that this will evolve through progressive leadership and consensus rather than being forced on the world by catastrophe." (New Zealand)[60]

Some participants challenged a prevailing idea that society will look after the environment once it has built up the economy, while others promoted the removal of economic subsidies which encourage the decline in biodiversity:

"We can not expect to clean up the physical environment and build the economy first and only then restore our biodiversity – because extinction is forever." (New Zealand)[61]

"While free commerce, conservation of ecosystems and human wellbeing are not incompatible, it is not certain that economic growth guarantees greater investment in environmental management and conservation of ecosystems. With globalization on the rise a consensus among an influential group of countries is required to promote real change." (Colombia)[62]

"There are, unfortunately, far too many examples of markets and policies failing to value the role of bio- diversity, and particularly to value the ecosystem goods and services that biodiversity provide to our societies and economies. The result of this omission is that environmental capital is often undermined to secure rela- tively short-term economic gain."

"This problem is particularly acute within the agricultural sector which remains the single largest threat to biodiversity through land-use change, pollution and the introduction of invasive species. Removal of those agricultural, fisheries and forestry subsidies that have an adverse impact on biodiversity and that perpetuate wealth disparities between producing and consuming nations may offer a useful first step towards addressing this problem." (Australia)[63]

The dilemmas of consumer-based development

Contributors drew attention to the role of consumers in the development, as well as to the irony of countries being encouraged to develop by producing exports for Western economies:

"…poor countries are caught in a tragic dilemma: they are quite rightly upset at the excessive consumption by the wealthy countries; yet they are dependent on this over-consumption to absorb the exports they hope to produce." (USA)[64]

One contributor pointed out that discussions on ecological sustainability have traditionally focused on 'impact' (such as the efforts to tackle human population growth). However, in addressing problems of unsustainability, discussions now need to be extended to include 'demand' management, and the role of consumers:

"…there is a fourth environmental challenge on top of preservation, conservation and pollution reduction (which together we may call impact management) which is

58 Week 3, No. 1.

59 Week 1, No. 6.

60 Week 3, No. 27.

61 Week 3, No. 27.

62 Week 3, No. 12.

63 Week 1, No. 18.

64 Week 3, No. 15.

demand reduction, or 'demand management'. The demand approach works slightly differently from impact management in that rather than starting with the symptom, it starts with the cause. Why are people travelling (rather than how can we make transport 'less impactful')? Why are they using energy? etc." (UK)[65]

Some participants felt that conservation and environmental organizations should evolve to tackle consumer demand and attempt to change behaviour. Consumers can become part of the solution by creating public and market pressure for more sustainable production systems. However, such approaches would be up against the power of corporations, advertizing and the media (which drive consumption, and numb the population to its consequences), as well as many people's dream of an 'American lifestyle'.

"Human beings…particularly young and affluent people living in big cities, are very much influenced by all types of marketing and advertisement tools which 'sell' the concept that the important thing is 'to have, to buy' instead of 'to be happy, healthy and fair'. Therefore, we face an enormous challenge of mobilizing youth to build a society where solidarity, cooperation and sustainability are values that can help all of us, and therefore any one, to be happy." (Brazil)[66]

"The environmental sector is equipped with little more than passion, energy, and good intentions. The corporate sector, on the other hand, works with a strategy based on research and development. Serious scientific research is undertaken on the psychological and sociological aspects of attitudes and behaviour, i.e. how attitudes are formed, maintained and change. Billions are spent on this scientific research, the products of which are science-based advertisements and the outcome is the 'creation' of markets. On the other hand, in the environmental sector the concept of research in the field of psycho-social aspects of environmentalism is almost negligible." (Sri Lanka)[67]

"It is what people 'want' or 'want to be' that determines the volume of resource use and its trend. The US presents a bad example and newly developed countries especially those in Asia are catching up. Now it is the turn for China and India. This time the impact on resources will be magnified due to the size of population. Having failed to influence US policy and consumers on changes of 'American Lifestyle', do we have better ways to convince the Chinese and Indians?" (China)[68]

Quantifying Gaia

The forum generated debate on the need for new markets – ones that account for nature's values and allow "the economy to tell the ecological truth". However, such approaches are disliked by those who feel that estimates of monetary and other values of biodiversity for ecosystem services do not reflect the intrinsic and spiritual values of nature:

"There are, unfortunately, far too many examples of markets and policies failing to value the role of biodiversity, and particularly to value the ecosystem goods and services that biodiversity provides to our societies and economies. The result of this omission is that environmental capital is often undermined to secure relatively short-term economic gain." (Australia)[69]

"Although companies benefit from ecosystem services every day, through their buildings, water consumption, production (including use of raw materials) and transportation, they have been slow in understanding the value of these services. An important reason is that these services are rarely valued in the marketplace." (Switzerland)[70]

"Markets and economic prices have not internalized the value of ecosystem services to reveal true prices and also ecosystem impact". (Colombia)[71]

"Where are the ecological indicators to match economic indicators? Could we invite the captains of economic globalization to make direct investments in the development and use of ecological indicators that do as much to monitor and assess the integrity of Earth as economic indicators do to measure the success of the economy. Can a healthy economy exist in an unhealthy world?" (USA)[72]

"Ultimately we have to ask what is the purpose or value of biodiversity? There are plenty of estimates of the monetary and other values of biodiversity for ecological services – we can only guess at the intricacies and interdependencies of food webs and ecosystem processes (including our own role), but the ultimate value is intrinsic and spiritual." (New Zealand)[73]

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65 Comments on Background Paper, No. 3.

66 Week 4, No. 14.

67 Week 2, No. 17.

68 Week 3, No. 16.

69 Week 1, No. 18.

70 Week 1, No. 30.

71 Week 1, No. 14.

72 Week 3, No. 20.

73 Week 3, No. 27.

The market as a lever for sustainability

There were mixed opinions about the role of the market in advancing sustainability. While some promoted the market as a positive lever for change, others were sceptical about the ability of the market to deliver outcomes that were beneficial to people and biodiversity:

"The market approach to sustainability is a good idea and a necessary path into future. But we need to avoid the 'myth of market'". (China)[74]

"The problem is that biodiversity extinction does not send out market signals in advance and so, as with global warming, the market is powerless to avert the impending calamity. We are a crisis species – we only act when the crisis is upon us". (New Zealand)[75]

"The belief placed in markets is misplaced – they do not prioritize sustainability, they don't act on their own". (Pakistan)[76]

"Sustainability and commerce cannot coexist in the context of the current global market unless it is understood that the economy is dependent on 'natural capital'". (Bolivia)[77]

Many participants from the global south observed that current markets are skewed against the poor as well as biodiversity conservation. While trade liberalization may promote growth, the poverty reduction aspects of trade liberalization were considered highly questionable:

"The market can prompt changes, but it doesn't necessarily reduce poverty – it may even increase it". (Mexico)[78]

"The market needs to shift from 'free' to 'shared, common, just and equitable'". (Peru)[79]

Some observed that developing countries are becoming the victims of large corporations which dominate global commerce and economies, particularly in seed and agricultural production. World Trade Organization rules which claim to improve living conditions for local people have not succeeded in doing so (Bolivia).[80]

Despite some promising examples of markets and commercial models that conserve biodiversity and improve ecosystem services at local levels, [81] other participants reported that the development of markets for non-timber forest products (NTFPs) is not contributing effectively to poverty alleviation nor providing sufficient economic incentives to rural communities for conservation (Colombia):[82]

"…the recent trend in commercialisation of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) is not contributing effectively to either poverty alleviation or to providing sufficient economic incentives to rural communities for conservation. Many large pharmaceutical drug manu- facturing companies rely on traders and agents who exploit local herb gatherers to harvest medicinal plants without paying attention to sustainable exploitation. There is enough evidence that commercialisations of NTFPs, especially medicinal plants, have lead to a production chain based on an extremely inequitable distribution of benefits". (Pakistan)[83]

Others asked questions about the scale of impact of green and fair trade market initiatives, and drew attention to the need for all sectors of society to work together for social and ecological sustainability:

"We need to ask whether the concept of fair trade is working? Are all the members of WTO and TRIPS sincerely following their protocols? Are the concepts of Ecotourism really working within their definitions?" (India)[84]

"We have lessons and policy experiences to learn from developed countries, such as ethical trading initiatives, Fair Trade labelling, Forest Stewardship Council, Greening Consumer movement, etc. But so far all these voluntary/market approaches are at a very limited scale… The transparency, creditability and real benefits to sustainable development are open to question although they do raise awareness on responsible business. We need all stakeholders from business, government and civil society to cooperate. If regulated and incentivised well, business can make money while doing good". (China)[85]

74 Week 3, No. 17.
75 Week 3, No. 27.
76 Week 3, No. 8.
77 Week 3, No. 22.
78 Week 3, No. 10.
79 Week 3, No. 14.
80 Week 3, No. 22.
81 Week 3, No. 23 and No. 24.
82 Week 3, No. 25.
83 Week 3, No. 26.
84 Week 3, No. 2.
85 Week 3, No. 17.

"I agree that voluntary action may not go far enough and that appropriate enabling frameworks (property rights, legal liability, access to information, reporting requirements and of course fiscal incentives) are often a necessary complement to spur the market on a large scale. At the same time, voluntary initiatives can be very helpful to inform the design of effective, efficient and equitable enabling policies." (USA)[86]

"What we need is a combination of market-based approaches towards conservation supported by strong institutions that can ensure both equity and efficiency of resource distribution. Community-based rights to common pool resources along with secure access rights to local indigenous communities are prerequisites for tackling poverty and conserving the environment simultaneously." (Pakistan)[87]

New economic and business models

The discussion on the new economy and sustainability provided glimpses of emerging opportunities for the private sector, new economic and business models, and some of the transformations we might expect to see in business management training for sustainability:

"Working with business to find market-based approaches to environmental challenges will attract and sustain the attention of business leaders. Companies have not realised the new business opportunities which will emerge as demand grows for more efficient or different ways to manage and use the environment".

"Business leaders are eager to see a transition from ecosystem management as purely a business cost (risk/ impact mitigation) to developing the supply of ecosystem services as profitable business opportunities, such as carbon sequestration, biodiversity offsets or certified commodities". (Switzerland)[88]

"There is growing public concern and increasing political pressure for business activity to address environmental and social outcomes as well as economic results. As a result managers will increasingly come under pressure to act in ways which are ethically, environmentally and socially responsible".

"We believe that it will soon become unacceptable for business schools to send graduates out into the world who have been educated to focus only on economic outcomes". (UK)[89]

One contributor focused on innovations in production and manufacturing systems for a new economy inspired by ecosystem science, and introduced 12 Axioms of Economics derived from a series of case studies worldwide that offer new perspectives in economics for a sustainable future (Japan).[90]

New business models which combine commerce with social development were also referred to. Low income families, at the 'base of the pyramid', stand to gain from small loans for new products, such as mobile phones, enabling then to bypass middle-men and create new opportunities to help improve their living standards. Some questioned the influence of base of the pyramid approaches since most developing countries still focus on national and regional development and ignore indigenous and poor communities (India).[91]

Technologies for the future

Technology was recognized as a critical component of sustainability and one that powerfully mediates relationships between people and nature. Well-adapted technologies are clearly critical to a sustainable future. Several people spoke about the need to switch to renewable energy and reuse/recycle technologies, and the need of political support to facilitate this shift. It was pointed out, however, that being clean and green did not necessarily mean that biodiversity would be conserved:

"Sustaining our early twenty-first century global civilization now depends on shifting to a renewable-Senergy-based, reuse/recycle economy with a diversified transport system". (USA)[92]

"Glimpses of the new economy can be seen in the wind farms of Western Europe, the solar rooftops of Japan, the fast-growing hybrid car fleet of the United States, the reforested mountains of South Korea, and the bicycle-friendly streets of Amsterdam. Virtually everything we need to do to build an economy that will sustain economic progress is already being done in one or more countries". (USA)[93]

"On the question of how new advances in science and technology could be picked up by companies, the key problem is the lack of major incentives for technology innovation and adaptation. The issue is not so much technical as political". (Switzerland)[94]

86 Week 3, No. 18.
87 Week 3, No. 26.
88 Week, 1, No. 39.
89 Week 4, No. 22.
90 Week 3, No. 28.
91 Week 3, No. 2.
92 Week 3, No. 1.
93 Week 3, No. 1.
94 Week 1, No. 39.

"It needs to be pointed out that 'clean and green' does not necessarily mean that biodiversity will prevail (if by this term we mean the unique species of each nation – or that part of global biological variation that each state is responsible for and which provides its unique identity). Especially in New Zealand, we could have perfectly clean land and water but no indigenous plants and animals in sight". (New Zealand)[95]

The discussion revealed a growing interest in the role of biomimicry or technological innovations inspired by nature for a sustainable future. Unlike the 'take, make and waste' models of our current industrial systems, nature manufactures biodegradable products, on site, using only small quantities of chemicals at ambient temperatures, is extraordinarily energy efficient, and has already solved many of the problems that humans are struggling with:

"Biomimicry is about learning 'from nature', rather than just 'about nature'. Nature creates conditions for life and generates products and processes that humans haven't come close to understanding. Spider's web, for example, is five times stronger, ounce for ounce, than steel. Rhino horn, which contains no living cells, heals when cracked. We are beginning to see a new interest in the genius of nature which surrounds us, and to explore the application of some those ideas in entirely novel ways in engineering and manufacturing." (Japan)[96]

"If we look a thousand years into the future, it may well be that the human societies that have survived to that time were precisely those whose evolution had most closely emulated the efficiency principles of nature, and designed production systems that mobilized energy sources from the sun or were otherwise renewable, and ensured that the waste from one process was the essential input to another process. Surely this is the direction we should follow in seeking sustainability for human societies." (USA)[97]

Collaborative governance[98]

Participants agreed that governance and accountability were key to a sustainable future, but that current mindsets and governance frameworks were not keeping pace with twenty-first century challenges. IUCN was urged to support innovations in planning and decision-making frameworks, public-private partnerships, and new governance and accountability models that empower citizens to hold those in power accountable for a sustainable future:

"I think governance is fundamental to achieve environmental sustainability. Governance is an underlying democratic value – the foundation of tools, rules and legislation, citizens' rights, civic engagement dozens which enable any citizen and civil society organization to exercise the legitimate right of 'controlling' the State and the Market, the two main 'forces' … that 'guide' the path of societies. Governance means, therefore, a democratic way of life, where ethnic, biological, cultural and religious diversities are valued just as much as peace, wealth, etc." (Brazil)[99]

"The Future of Sustainability paradigm must influence governance at global, regional and local levels, and [generate] a new governance system engaging state and non-state actors and decision makers". (Colombia)[100]

Well-managed companies understand that their "social license" to operate (a broader concept than strictly legal permission) depends on satisfying a wide range of different stakeholders. To achieve the necessary consensus, many companies seek to develop collaborative partnerships involving the company, various government bodies, the surrounding community and other stakeholder groups such as NGOs. Businesses must demonstrate that their operations can be managed without damage to the environment and that they can make a positive contribution. This is often best done through partnerships". (Switzerland)[101]

Many contributors recognized the role that communities and indigenous peoples play in the sustainable management of resources, and that "Participatory approaches seem [to be] the only solution" (Pakistan)[102] particularly in the absence of strong government departments to manage resources.

Advances made by conservation organizations in developing collaborative governance approaches at a local level were also recognized. However, the involvement of stakeholders in equitable and meaningful ways is harder to achieve at larger geographical scales:

"One problem with so-called landscape approaches is that the involvement of stakeholders in meaningful and equitable decision making appears to be increasingly complicated with scale. Finding effective means to involve

95 Week 3, No. 27.

96 Week 3, No. 28.

97 Week 3, No. 15.

98 There were no major discussions on the multilateral environmental agreements within the e-forum.

99 Week 4, No. 14.

100 Week 1, No. 14.

101 Week 1, No. 39.

102 Week 1, No. 21.

stakeholders in negotiated outcomes at landscape scale is an area that requires concerted effort". (Australia)[103]

"Though some cultures are territorially based… there is the problem of seeking sustainability among the many cultures and societies (diaspora, hybrids, transnational communities, virtual, urban, etc.) that are increasingly de-territorialized and alienated from a sense of responsibility towards nature". (Colombia)[104]

To some, governance for sustainability confirms the need for global organizations like the United Nations, while others claim that leaders within the United Nations will never tackle the underlying power relations which are part of the current problem:

"Now, more than ever before, humanity needs a global organization to consider, confront and overcome looming global challenges mentioned ubiquitously by the contributors to this discussion. The only organization to which the human community can turn is the UN". (USA)[105]

"[The UNEP leader] fudges the issues behind 'governance' solutions, which are never very inspiring, however well-intentioned, and are in any case pretty schooled to the rhythms of governing structures already dominating the *status quo* (e.g. World Bank)". (UK)[106]

103 Week 1, No. 18.

104 Week 1, No. 14.

105 Week 1, No. 28.

106 Comments on Background Paper, No. 3.

6. Shaping the Future

Time for critical self-reflection

There was a strong suggestion throughout the Forum that the environmental movement itself might be to blame for lack of progress towards sustainability in society. Rather than blaming society for 'not getting the message', there was a need for some critical reflection on what environmental organizations themselves might be doing wrong.

"If still we want to live in our 'paradise' and tell and retell success stories (which are like droplets on a sizzling pan), I am sorry to say this sector might find it difficult to survive. We can keep on living in our own make-believe world by doing things the way we know best. Perhaps, we are surrounded by our own noise – our own rhetoric – we take our echoes as a response of the wider world. I am sorry – it is delusional". (Sri Lanka)[107]

"….the environmental movement is stuck with well-meaning but clapped-out leadership and we need to look in as well as out". (UK)[108]

"There is a need for individuals and institutions to take risks. I just don't see this happening, and this is where the environmental movement has largely gone wrong. There is security in a) micro-measuring impact, b) accepting governmental mandates and funding, c) working in massive coalitions, but all of these militate against real visionary work, self-and-other critique, and radical innovation….If we want vision, passion, innova- tion…we need people and institutions to take big risks". (UK)[109]

"…we need the urgency and single-mindedness and risk-taking of the 1970s, with the new resources and institutional embeddedness and confidence and suavity of the 00s, in order to create the conditions of vision, innovation, and to be able to bring in the real change magicians". (UK)[110]

"…the attitude of the environment sector is the typical syndrome of 'the frog in boiling water'. We need to get out of this rut that we seem to be stuck in and start thinking outside of the box". (Sri Lanka)[111]

New constituencies

It was recognized that it had been 'talking to itself' and 'preaching to the converted' for too long and that it needed to reach beyond the scientific and policy communities to new social groups and develop new ways of communicating:

"…the environmental message has to go beyond the 'green circle', from those who are already convinced, also the language must go beyond the usual negative discourse". (Ecuador)[112]

"IUCN must seek a wider audience since preaching to the choir…is hardly workable anymore. We have to reach out in all directions – civil society, businesses, NGOs and the state apparatuses". (Pakistan)[113]

There were different opinions on how en-viron-mental organizations might gain more influence in society. To some it is a matter of engaging with the general public. To others it is a matter of greens entering politics and gaining more power, and forging new partnerships and alliances:

"Just as every artist has to go where the people are: I believe every environmentalist has to go where the people are". (Brazil)[114]

"Many communications initiatives and programme proposals repeatedly focus on 'higher-level' actors… decision makers, intergovernmental institutions, the donor and development community. And this is done with a primary objective to 'convince' the right people of the relevant conservation message. However, I am not convinced that this alone will work. So we have to ask ourselves 'What will it take to provide convincing arguments to decision makers?' And I think the answer is: 'The weight of public opinion"'. (Netherlands)[115]

"The three billion people struggling to keep their dreams of the next meal alive will never care for the local natural resources. The two billion middle class will take part in walks, sing songs, discuss the consumerism of the first world and for the most part have a 'positive attitude' towards the environment but will do nothing substantial

107 Week 1, No. 48.

108 Comments on Background Paper, No. 3.

109 Comments on Background Paper, No.3.

110 Comments on Background Paper, No. 3.

111 Week 2, No. 17.

112 Week 4, No. 12.

113 Week 4, No. 1.

114 Week 4, No. 13.

115 Week 4, No. 23.

for the cause of the environment through their behaviour. I need not say anything about the consumer behaviour of the First World. This leaves a negligible population caring for the environment in 'real terms'. And this minority has no power as their majority never dared to go for the real power i.e. politics! The Green Parties need to be promoted". (Sri Lanka)[116]

New language

The forum generated a significant debate on the role of language and the most effective way of framing and communicating environmental issues.

To some it is hardly surprising that people lose interest in the environment when they are constantly faced with the 'doom and gloom' narratives characteristic of the environmental movement since the 1970s, and which continue to colour so many environmental papers, conference speakers, films and Powerpoint presentations. People are more likely to become motivated and energized for sustainability when introduced to hopeful, optimistic, well designed, inexpensive, fun solutions.

Referring to the first statement of the week, one contributor wrote:

"….if our scientists in the environment and sustainability movement are trying to build public support with this kind of [negative] language and messages, no wonder people are tuning out! I tune out myself and I am a committed member of this movement…".

….How can we write about hope rather than the language of failure and crisis to further motivate people to change? How can we talk about our values and the things we want to protect? How can we write about the successes and developments in our field, and celebrate the changes we are making in our lifestyles no matter how incremental? How can we learn from what is working? What do we learn from our failures, or from messages that remind us all the time about how critical and irreversible things are?" (USA)[117]

Many other participants, on the other hand, felt that society needs to have problems clearly explained and to recognize that things need to be done fast:

"…what's wrong with describing problems in negative terms? And in addressing those problems in forceful and confronting ways that don't shy away from setting limits and demanding change? The most effective anti-smoking campaigns in my country use awful images to shock people out of their complacency. It's no good pretending that the reality is not awful and hoping that the worst won't happen". (Australia)[118]

"…hope is not a plan of action! Hope is what slaveholders gave their slaves. Hope generally does not empower people". (USA)[119]

"….we do need to tell the truth about what is happening, while not seeming to be doomsayers. And we need to present the good news without seeming Polly-Anna-ish". (USA)[120]

"…if there is to be talk of hope and optimism and opportunity, make sure it's aimed at the poor, afflicted buggers of the world and give the comfortable apathetic bastards who are using their unfair share a good kick up the backside". (Australia)[121]

Towards the end of the forum there seemed to be an emerging consensus that we need open critical debate, and ways of coping with the creative tension between fear and hope, pessimism and optimism, carrot and stick. It is the creativity and quality of the communications that count – rather than whether the message is negative or positive *per se*.

Better marketing

There were many contributions on the need to find new, simple and resonant ways of communicating with different audiences in society, that capture peoples' hearts and minds. Some contributors urged IUCN to review the relevance of its research and scientific publications in the light of new and urgent needs:

"…conservation and development language is obsolete…experts on communications and marketing should be brought in to help with phrasing messages…". (Peru)[122]

"…are [IUCN publications] read even by people of IUCN or other conservation scientists or activists? If other scientists do not heed such research, what can one expect of non-scientists who are the vast majority of people worldwide?" (Colombia)[123]

"…the challenge is to simplify the message so that the public can understand easily….a lot of people…are not really interested in the technical nitty-gritty of the environmental problem….let us produce some literature that is positive in tone…and also some workable solutions in a

116 Week 2, No. 17.
117 Week 1, No. 1.
118 Week 1, No. 52.
119 Week 1, No. 2.
120 Week 1, No. 11.
121 Week 1, No. 52.
122 Week 4, No. 33.
123 Week 1, No. 50.

language that is easily grasped by non-scientists like me… Simplify the strategies, plans of actions, and next steps in a language we can all share". (Pakistan)[124]

"…I think that we really need to rethink how we communicate. If we want to change conservation from being an elitist movement to something that strikes the masses, we have to use a language and images that are easy to understand". (Young professional, Switzerland)[125]

"…we need targeted and innovative initiatives that can 'hook' civil society….this may require a review of jargon and tools to deliver a simpler and consistent message and 'to go where the people are' – not to 'preach' to – but to work with people in understanding perceptions...". (Netherlands)[126]

"…for every major success story in conservation….where people were empowered for conservation…is a mass movement in the field, for a good cause and people were convinced….reach to the heart of people to change attitudes". (Nepal)[127]

"People respond to specific stories and care about issues most deeply through specifics. Examples that show linkages between the environment and people can surprise the public, the first step in engaging the heart to apply political will. The point is to select the best example and frame the issue in a way that it can be grappled with". (USA)[128]

"…while the environmental movement succeeded in making people aware of environmental issues, it fell far short in making them care enough to instigate a change in destructive behaviour!!! We have made strategic blunders in selling our 'product' by not realizing market needs or even in creating the right sustainable market". (Sri Lanka)[129]

"In Western societies, conservation awareness (environmentalism) may need to adopt a marketing approach normally associated with mass media and civil society and the corporate sector. Respecting the environment needs to be seen as positively 'hip"'. (Netherlands)[130]

New media

The final week of the Forum also drew attention to the new media and communications revolution – interactive Web 2 technologies, Blogs, Vlogs, Podcasts, Wikis, new social networks such as My Space and Face Book as well as interactive TV – which are creating new ways of interacting and sharing information that were undreamt of a generation ago.

There was agreement that organizations like IUCN should explore ways of using new technologies as a way of raising awareness and engaging different groups. At the same time organizations need to ensure the use of culturally relevant forms of media:

"….we now need to reach out massively to the technical and communications revolution – which is reinventing lifestyle before our eyes with nary a 'campaigner' and without much research in view – and the creative communities in general (as have the development/AIDS campaigners)". (UK)[131]

"…we need to recognize the growing trends in interactive media". (Netherlands)[132]

"…the new information and communication technologies and the internet are available for creating the linkages". (Pakistan)[133]

Engaging the next generation

There was agreement that young people are very divorced from nature in contemporary society and that this creates the problem of failing to understand the natural processes that we are dependent on, as well as generating deeper psychological and sociological problems:

"…the environmental message has not reached all the youth". (Ecuador)[134]

"…we can't care about something we don't know". (Bolivia)[135]

124 Week 1, No. 32.
125 Week 4, No. 20.
126 Week 4, No. 23.
127 Week 4, No. 2.
128 Week 2, No. 16.
129 Week 1, No. 48.
130 Week 4, No. 23.
131 Comments on Background Paper, No.3.
132 Week 4, No. 23.
133 Week 4, No. 1.
134 Week 3, No. 11.
135 Week 4, No. 28.

One contributor shared information on a new book describing the nature deficit disorder:

"…a recently published thought-provoking book by Louv (2006) called 'The Last Child in the Woods'…is about the importance of early childhood experience in nature in the formation of healthy adults with a grip on reality and understanding of the natural processes we are all dependent on. Louv has coined the concept of the Nature Deficit Disorder to describe the absence of such an experience". (New Zealand)[136]

Nevertheless it was recognized that there are many young people who want to get involved in practical and concrete activities and that environmental organizations need to reach out to the youth in innovative ways:

" …we need to reach the youth sensitively through new forms of communication – youth programmes, concerts, theatre, movies, camping…". (Bolivia)[137]

"…there are millions out there, especially among the youth, who want to do something tangible. They're looking for leadership but I think they would do more if they were offered good examples". (Kenya)[138]

"…using the motto 'go where the (young) people are', we may consider addressing environmental issues to youth groups that are already organized around music, hip-hop, sports…". (Brazil)[139]

"…take lessons from big corporate sectors. Why does the younger generation like to drink Coca Cola and eat McDonald's products? It's just a matter of advertisement. We need to campaign in the language of their choice. Follow them". (Nepal)[140]

"There are diverse experiences of using community based agriculture, even in poor urban districts, using nursery in schools to educate children on 'nature process'". (Brazil)[141]

In Europe "environmental degradation is not (yet) affecting [the young generation] directly …That's why we constantly need to link nature conservation to personal wellbeing. And this needs to happen at school". (Germany)[142]

Social movements

Participants explored the idea that the future of sustainability might depend on harnessing grass-roots citizen action and supporting social movements, recognizing that the rise of such movements is generally related to crises in the governance of the global economy and the environment.

The discussion focused on the need to find ways of linking the agendas of the environmental and social movements – and for the environmental movement to see itself as part of a broader sustainability movement. Such global alliances might just create the civil society momentum and the tipping point needed for systemic change.

"The whole debate should be out of the closed community of scientists and professionals and should now reach the wider public. Through public pressure we can change the priorities of governments in power. The focus is to start a movement aimed at the ruling elites through pressure of the people from below". (Pakistan)[143]

"We have to expand our circle of audience in order to strengthen the global movement for justice, social and environmental sustainability". (Brazil)[144]

"Social movements (and I would add also civil society organizations) can not limit their role to monitor the State. We, citizens, have to also monitor the 'Market' and be agents of change". (Moira Barrientos/Brazil)

Several participants rightly drew a distinction between the conservation, environmental and sustainability movements. A striking message relevant to all three was the need to build alliances and find new ways of working to influence those who are undermining life-support systems:

"….human rights organizations, religious groups, women, etc. They all have their agenda. We need to help them to find their linkages between the existing agenda and environmental sustainability. It is not easy, since they are all concentrated around their agenda, and some of them are not yet conscious about the environmental state of the planet or of the location they live. But we can not miss the challenge to talk to them. Conservation and environmental sustainability is a very big challenge and can not be dealt with by environmentalists alone". (Brazil)[145]

136 Week 3, No. 27.
137 Week 4, No. 28.
138 Week 4, No. 3.
139 Week 4, No. 14.
140 Week 4, No. 2.
141 Week 4, No. 14.
142 Week 4, No. 20.
143 Week 1, No. 32.
144 Week 4, No. 13.
145 Week 4, No. 14.

"The sustainability and environmental movement needs to be scaled-up to a global movement of altered human consciousness and value system…the point is to go beyond the sustainability and environment debate….the social networks should be aligned to empower a social movement for the creation of the planetary civilization for the desired change in human values and living". (Pakistan)[146]

"In just one generation the environmental sustainability movement has grown and flourished in its diversity…The many groups in the environmental sustainability movement show strength in diversity but it is essential that, whatever single issue we are focussing on, we hold the big picture in our minds. The time has come when separate and disparate groups must stand together". (India)[147]

"The holistic movement in itself should not be fragmented. Alone we are weak but together we are strong and we can change the world". (India)[148]

Learning for sustainable development

The role of education and learning for sustainability was emphasized by contributors throughout the forum:

"Most of us from poor countries have made poverty history because of education". (African student in the UK)[149]

"Greater investment in education is more important than some of the other forms of development that have been proposed [in this forum]". (USA)[150]

Some people promoted environmental education because of the perceived need to change peoples' behaviour (i.e. knowledge transfer):

"Education is vital. And not only basic primary education but secondary as well. Teaching local tribes about the animals and the forests in which they live is half the battle. It's amazing to see a person living in such poor conditions get excited about protecting an animal, all the while they and their families are just trying to survive. We must give them a chance to make a living as well as educating people about sustainable farming techniques". (Congo)[151]

"The future of sustainability may be secured through proper awareness particularly among women and children". (India)[152]

"I think that education and communication are still fundamental to promote the sustainable management of environment and at the same time to help communities to improve their condition and fight poverty". (Mexico)[153]

Others saw education more in terms of learning, and encouraging collective analysis and critical reflection for sustainability, and drew a distinction between different generations of education for sustainable development (ESD):

"One can clearly identify an 'ESD1' (promoting responsible behaviours) and 'ESD2' (exploring and critiquing the concept of sustainability). I see these as complementary. Indeed too much of one without the other could be counter productive.

ESD 2 recognizes that sustainability is in fact a learning process… 'sustainability is learning'. Even the UK Government's Sustainable Schools Strategy contains the observation that 'sustainable development is an agenda for innovation rather than slowing down' (although we might add that 'slowing down' in some areas may well be one outcome of our shared analyses)". (Australia)[154]

"Education (formal and non formal) should give, in the first place, the tools to individuals to promote critical thinking about their own relationship with the environment and to decide if this relationship is sustainable or not (and if they want to change it or not). In the same way communication should be considered not only as an information transfer (information is not enough to change behaviour) but a source of tools that promotes critical thinking and dialogue to organize and act differently". (Mexico)[155]

It was felt that we need to go beyond education 'about nature', to fostering global citizen awareness rooted in an understanding of the 'interdependence of human and natural systems':

"Environmental education that only …promotes conservation as a strategy, I find elitist. We cannot afford anymore to limit ourselves to put fences around our own reserves and parks, showing the rest of the world how well

146 Week 4, No. 1.
147 Week 4, No. 15.
148 Week 4, No. 15.
149 Week 1, No. 9.
150 Week 1, No. 35.
151 Week 1, No. 30.
152 Week 1, No. 34.
153 Week 2, No. 30.
154 Week 1, No. 36.
155 Week 2, No. 30.

we contribute to a global ecological network. This is necessary, but it is only the first step". (Netherlands)[156]

"Environmental education is of course an urgent need. But closer to the topic of sustainable development is the development and education of *global citizens*. Merging social, environmental and economic issues and justice into the education system leads to greater awareness of the human-environment system we create, reproduce and often damage."

"There is a need for holistic thinking… Perhaps we need to rethink education by tearing down the walls dividing subjects and disciplines. History and geography classes are intertwined with each other, as well as with biology and chemistry. Fostering interdisciplinary teaching at younger levels of education would lead to enhanced interdisciplinary discussion and cooperation at higher education facilities". (Canada)[157]

"The vast majority of educators – as far as I have seen and heard them operate in many countries – are just as traditional, or even outdated as the ones they wish to reach. Not because they do not have the right to address 'small issues' but because they continue to fail to connect them to wider issues: geographically, politically, socially and in time." (Netherlands)[158]

There was some discussion on how we should define objects to learn about, how to make them appropriate in different contexts, and how we could make the most of new learning technologies:

"Already back in 1998, the British Panel on [Education for Sustainable Development] in the Schools Sector has formulated what it could be all about. It came up with seven key concepts:

- Interdependence – of society, economy and the natural environment, from local to global.
- Citizenship and stewardship – rights and responsibilities, participation and cooperation.
- Needs and rights of future generations.
- Diversity – cultural, social, economic and biological.
- Quality of life, equity and justice.
- Sustainable change – development and carrying capacity.
- Uncertainty and precaution in action." (Netherlands)[159]

"… practically all of the formal educational systems in place in Africa (most especially in West Africa) are modelled on Western standards which are expensive to attain, inaccessible to most, often irrelevant and not enough to ensure a job, an income and a sense of achievement and security for self and family." (Africa)[160]

We must find innovative ways to engage the masses to enhance their abilities to grasp the problems as well as inspire positive action at all levels. A great deal of emphasis should be placed on informal means of communicating through local and traditional art and music – a language that is easily understood by all, especially the youth who form over 60% of the adult population in some countries". (Africa)[161]

"[Reaching new networks] is very easy in the twentieth century, with the help of technology. We can do a lot more than what was possible ten years ago. Today technology has reached as far as the moon". (India)[162]

A call to action

The discussion highlighted the desire of people to focus on concrete solutions for sustainability, and on finding ways of incorporating green issues into everyday consumer and lifestyle choices. The emphasis was on involving everyone for sustainability today – not sometime in the future. Indeed some within the forum were disappointed that there were not more examples of solutions:

"We need to go beyond the discourse of sustainability into concrete actions". (Bolivia)[163]

"The creation of a sustainable life has to start by everybody today". (Finland)[164]

"Awareness alone is meaningless if not followed by real actions". (Sri Lanka)[165]

156 Week 2, No. 25.
157 Week 4, No. 16.
158 Week 2, No. 25.
159 Week 2, No. 25.
160 Week 1, no. 57.
161 Week 1, No. 57.
162 Week 2, No. 11.
163 Week 2, No. 32.
164 Week 1, No. 43.
165 Week 1, No. 48.

"Human sustainability can only be achieved if the grassroots of every corner of the world are mobilized to conserve their backyard biodiversity". (China)[166]

"We need not reinvent the wheel. The solutions are available! Let us seize the best solutions and move forward!" (USA)[167]

"I have great difficulty with the direction of the dialogue. I was expecting something concrete and suggestions on how we could directly address the issues of sustainable biodiversity conservation". (USA)[168]

Several participants highlighted the value of simple, practical actions of communities for sustainability, even if it's not done in the name of sustainability, while others noted that experts must help encourage enthusiasm:

"It is worthwhile presenting the problem in practical and down-to-earth contexts….rather than confining to futuristic views, the focus should also be put on present day do-ables. This may call for identification of simple and practical indicators of emerging unsustainability at micro levels; and steps to address them." (Nepal)

"Indicators of unsustainability have been suggested and recorded by the illiterate villagers themselves, who know little about the formal sustainability concepts. … over a period of last 8–10 years, efforts to reverse negative changes have led to near restoration of part of the past situation…sustainability is an aggregation of such place-based positive achievements. What has been stated above would make more and practical sense for the grass-roots-level decision makers, even if it does not find any space even as a foot note in the learned discourse on sustainability or future of sustainability." (Nepal)[169]

"…the key is civic mobilization and planned action at the local level based on indigenous knowledge traditions in combination with modern scientific knowledge through local management". (Pakistan)[170]

"The vast tree planting and greening of Beijing for the Olympics is a great start to enhancing nature and making natural processes visible and accessible to urban dwellers – young and old – in the world's most populous country." (New Zealand)[171]

"Is there a way that people can sign up to doing something practical? A kind of 'play your part' program? Or even better IUCN could play a key role if it served as a forum for global learning – offering inspirational example of case studies to those who want to do something. There are millions out there, especially among the youth, who want to do something tangible". (Kenya)[172]

"How can the people and organizations who wish to work for the sustainability of natural resources work with the small towns and indigenous groups of the world without making them feel violated? How can we help these towns build hope, confidence, enthusiasm, commitment, and plans and actions; so that they understand sustainability and development, without portraying ourselves as their rescuers or bearers of one single truth?" (Colombia)[173]

An agenda for innovation

Participants emphasized the importance of adopting an open-ended critical approach to the concepts of sustainable development and to recognize sustainability as a "learning process":

Sustainability, like development, is "a state where people have the freedom to choose a life one has reason to value with the proviso that this is within a society where values are explored and periodically critiqued". (Australia)[174]

A new generation of education for sustainable development encourages us to appreciate that:

"…sustainability is learning"

"…sustainable development is an agenda for innovation"

"…sustainability as exploration….sustainability as frontier".[175]

166 Week 1, No. 46.
167 Week 1, No. 12.
168 Week 1, No. 61.
169 Week 1, No. 22.
170 Week 4, No. 1.
171 Week 3, No. 27.
172 Week 4, No. 3.
173 Week 1, No. 15.
174 Week 1, No. 36.
175 Week 1, No. 36.

7. The Future of Sustainability and IUCN

There were mixed views about whether IUCN could play a meaningful role in promoting a new generation of sustainable thinking and action. To some, IUCN's role is deeply problematic:

"IUCN seems to me a classical example of an organisation which simply refuses to lobby for alternatives because it hasn't got the evidence for them: so it publishes Red Lists dutifully, and protects areas, and contributes to the Multilateral Environmental Agreements. But it needs a cultural shift to take the risk in talking up a future that doesn't exist, rather than railing against failings of the world that does." (UK)

"The other problem for IUCN is indeed both the 'governmental' structure: annoy member states and say good-bye to core funding, a story as old as government itself; and 'distributed' structure – if you lead too strong on one approach, you don't take the Commissions and individual Members with you. Governmental backing and mega-consensus strike me as limiting". (UK)

"IUCN was once already at the forefront of developing sustainable thinking, with the *World Conservation Strategy* in the 80s….The problem is – why has it not been continuing to do this? The problem is really the need for a new type of organisation that can aggressively lobby for alternative patterns of development, without being seen as an 'interest group', and yet using only partial information and evidence for the optimality of alternatives". (UK)[176]

Other participants were more encouraging about the role IUCN can play in helping shape a sustainable future:

"*Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living*….needs to be revived as a handbook for the Future of Sustainability Initiative….IUCN is in a unique position in the conservation community to promote the new-old concept of environmental sustainability: the most important constituency for change can be found in IUCN members, specifically its member states and state agencies." (US)[177]

"IUCN is probably in a stronger position than ever before to become the central moral agency of sustainability". (New Zealand)[178]

"The mantle of leadership rests on us at IUCN and our colleagues in like-minded sister organizations. We have to do things differently by emphasising not the headquarters but the regional levels. The work at the regional levels shall be the most important". (Pakistan)[179]

176 Comments on Background Document, No. 3.

177 Week 2, No. 1.

178 Comments on Background Document, No. 4.

179 Week 4, No. 1.

8. Summary of Challenges and Innovations

Topic	Challenges	Innovations
The Concept of Sustainable Development	Recognition that the three-pillar model is flawed. Sustainable development has lost its ecological sharp edge. Language has been hijacked by powerful and vested interests.	New models of sustainable development: ecosystem as foundation and life support. New ways of framing sustainability. Beyond 'concepts' to communities of practice.
Condition of Natural Environment Role of Science	Millennium ecosystem challenges The 'double extinction crisis' – loss of cultural diversity. Uncertainties in biodiversity science. Over-emphasis on western epistemologies. Science is too slow and fixated on 'how much' impact.	Innovations in 'sustainability sciences'/systems thinking. Cultural and biological diversity for resilient societies. Call for the democratization of science/a 'new science project' for the 21st century
Human Wellbeing and Sustainability	Poverty and environment. Power dynamics and marginalization. 'Affluenza' and environment. Materialistic values and culture. Linking species conservation to human wellbeing.	Rights-based approaches. Collaborative governance/new accountability models. New definitions of the 'good life'. Integrating culture, spirituality and wisdom traditions. New measures of wellbeing, happiness beyond GDP.
The New Economy and Biodiversity	Current development/economic path is unsustainable. Consumer-based development. Lack of suitable means of quantifying environmental costs. Patterns of trade, financial flows, and subsidies. Maladapted technologies. Lack of incentives. Market perceived as inappropriate for biodiversity conservation.	Rethinking development/globalization. Markets for ecosystem services. Social business entrepreneurs/ bottom of pyramid approaches. Rethinking the 'way we make things' – service/flow; life-cycle analysis, etc. Green design and solutions inspired by nature.
Reaching Out	Preaching to the already converted. Language of 'doom and gloom'/too technical. Young generation divorced from nature.	New audiences/constituencies. New language/marketing New interactive media (Web2). New alliances/partnerships with the social movement. ESD-2: An Agenda for Innovation. Practical, local solutions. Making green attractive, affordable, easy, a symbol of quality.

Annex 1

Participation within the Forum

Gender		Organizations			Age range	
Male	265	NGOs	239	52%	YP	123
Female	171	Universities	82	18%	MC	217
Not stated	26	IUCN	50	11%	S	66
		Governments	29	6%	Not stated	56
		Independent	15	3%		
		United Nations system	13	3%		
		Private sector	12	3%		
		IUCN Commissions	12	3%		
		Not stated	7	2%		
		Donors	3	1%		
Total	**462**	**Total**	**462**			**462**

Key
YP = Young professional (16–25 years)
MC = Mid-career (26–45 years)
S = Senior (46 +)

Annex 2

Hosting the Forum – lessons learned by IUCN

Objective

The original objective of the IUCN Electronic Discussion Forum was to make the Professor William Adams report of the IUCN Renowned Thinkers Meeting held in 2006 available for comment to IUCN members and partners.[180]

However, the original concept of the Forum was elaborated to provide a more structured discussion on various themes of the report to allow conversations between guest bloggers and IUCN staff, members, commissions and members of the public over a 4–6 week period. It was felt that the Adams report provided a stimulating background document for the Electronic Forum as a whole, although a few participants misunderstood that it had been produced especially for the Forum and indicated that it was too academic.

Themes

The weekly themes and statements were based on the main themes of the Adams report, and covered a range of scientific, social, economic, governance and communications issues. While some people felt that the themes were too broad, the e-discussion forum represented an effort to present and discuss a new era of sustainable development thinking as a coherent whole rather than in the fragmented ways of the past. The background document and weekly statements were made available in the three official IUCN languages: English, French and Spanish. The summaries were available in English only.

Guest bloggers

Guest bloggers were drawn from different parts of the world to represent the global scope of the debate and to encourage international participation. Most of the guest bloggers were drawn from participants of the original IUCN Renowned Thinkers meeting. It was felt that this helped to bring the renowned thinkers meeting closer to the public. The introductory statements for each week were written and/or edited by the guest bloggers. This took several weeks to prepare and translate. The interaction of guest bloggers with participants was a bit uneven, and some weeks were more successful than others. Interaction with participants by bloggers stimulated further contributions from participants.

Participation

The forum attracted over 460 registered participants from over 70 countries, and IUCN was pleased with the level of international participation. The forum stimulated a broad and reasonably coherent discussion on the Future of Sustainability, with some themes better represented than others. There had been some proactive engagement to solicit comments from participants to help 'seed' the site which had been time-consuming. Most comments were posted to participants, even those which were openly critical of the forum, or of the writing style or ideas within the background document. It was considered important to IUCN to retain the ability to filter comments before posting them on the web, although only a few comments had to be filtered out as inappropriate. Although the forum had been divided into four weeks, each with a different theme, many comments in Week 1 were of a more general nature. This situation could be improved in the future by having more focused and detailed explanations on the subject of each week.

Moderation

It was felt that the system of moderation had worked well. The provision of numbered comments and summaries of contributions were considered useful features of the forum. The moderators had worked quickly to provide short summaries and translations of submissions each day. Comments were collated daily and sent out to registered participants regularly by email as well as posted on the web. The volunteer team of moderators worked extremely well across the IUCN Secretariat. The moderation of the forum involved much more work than people had originally anticipated. It took more time than anticipated to collate and produce the final report since diverse comments were distributed across 200 pages. Editing quality, more timely feedback to participants could be improved in future projects.

Technical

The original idea was to hold the forum through the interactive IUCN Members Portal. However, it proved impossible to produce a quality public forum through the existing portal. Technical difficulties prompted the producer and webmaster to construct a new platform. It was essential that the forum had a clean appearance, with a personalized look and was user-friendly. Technical problems were quickly fixed, but the new process of uploading comments on the web required web skills and proved very time-consuming. It was felt that IUCN would need to upgrade its technical platform to improve the interactive elements, before running a similar electronic discussion forum in the future.

[180] See footnote 3.

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