



The World Conservation Union (IUCN)

West, Central Asia and North Africa (WESCANA)

# Situation Analysis

## 2007

*Initial draft for discussion by the Expert Group meeting in Amman 22.4.2007*

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## **Objective of the Situation Analysis:**

The situation analysis is an exercise conducted by IUCN programmes, whether regional or thematic to document and analyze the external environment in which the IUCN programme is, and will be operating. The main purpose of the exercise is to provide analytical knowledge for informed decision making regarding the programme future planning.

This particular WESCANA situation analysis aims to analyze the environmental (ecosystem related) and socio-economic (people related) conditions in WESCANA countries, with the purpose of the identification of potential future trends and the niche of the IUCN WESCANA programme. The situation aims also to provide the initial strategic orientation for the selection of priority areas for WESCANA programme 2009-2012 to be further discussed during IUCN WESCANA's Regional Conservation Forum and subsequent planning events at the regional and global levels.

This initial draft of the situation analysis was prepared for the experts group meeting to be held in Amman on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2007 with the purpose of

## **Section I.**

### **1.1 IUCN WESCANA at a glance:**

#### **1.1.1 The Region:**

Despite its vast area and diverse ecological conditions, WESCANA is a geographical area that has a lot of common environmental and socio-economic features. The **IUCN WESCANA** region spreads over three continents (Africa, Asia, and Europe) from Morocco in the West, through North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, and to the Central Asian countries in the East, and operates in 5 different languages.

IUCN WESCANA planning exercises in the last five years have identified a package of common environmental features and challenges that are shared by all WESCANA countries, they are:

- Aridity
- The high value of water resources
- Extensive rangelands
- Fragile marine and terrestrial biomes
- A wide variety of migratory species
- A history of common property resource use
- Shared cultural values, religion, and traditions
- Rapid social, economic and political changes
- Emergent civil societies
- Developing economies
- A desire to identify alternatives to external models of development
- Extensive oil/gas resources and an economic dependence on fossil fuels

These features will remain valid in the next few years and will continue to form the major challenges and characteristics that the WESCANA programme should be linked to.

#### **WESCANA Sub-regions:**

For reasons of enhancing sub-regional focus and impact and to assist in decentralized management the WESCANA region has been divided into three sub-regions:

- **West Asia Sub-region:**

The West Asia sub-region includes the countries of Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Yemen. IUCN aims to be active in almost all of the 14 countries of West Asia in various conservation and sustainable development activities.

The critical issues facing this region are:

- Land degradation & desertification influencing
- Unsustainable water extraction and water scarcity
- Biodiversity and habitat loss, overexploitation, excessive hunting, and species extinction.
- Threats to sensitive and rich marine and coastal ecosystems through pollution, habitat destruction, introduction of invasive alien species, and unplanned coastal development.

Moreover, some of the countries of this region face the often severe consequences of conflict and warfare along with its associated large-scale human suffering, destruction of infrastructure, and environmental degradation leading to a critical need for post-conflict environmental reconstruction.

Some of the ongoing projects in this region include:

- Support to the management of protected areas in the sub-region
- Water resources management throughout the sub-region
- Capacity building on biodiversity in Kuwait
- Support to the collaborative management and National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan in Yemen
- Support to the implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan in Oman

- **North Africa Sub-region:**

The North Africa sub-region includes the countries of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia which consist largely of dry lands that are vulnerable to desertification and drought. The main threats to North Africa's natural resources are desertification, water pollution, overgrazing, poverty, deforestation, and the transformation of oases and valleys into farming or urban areas. The North Africa region is also one of the 25 global biodiversity hotspots.

The unique climate of the North Africa region creates an environment rich in biodiversity, with very high levels of endemic species, and hundreds of plant species representing a wealth

of genetic resources rarely met elsewhere. This makes biodiversity conservation a vitally urgent agenda.

In particular, North Africa has one of the oldest and richest traditions associated with the use of medicinal plants. Medicinal plants are important for the people of the region, especially in rural areas where they are the only source of medicines available. Even in many urban areas, the price of modern medicines is increasing, and people are returning to the use of traditional plant remedies.

IUCN has been engaged since 1994 in a programme aimed at promoting the conservation of biodiversity in North Africa, developing the sustainable use of natural resources, and empowering local communities, especially women, in biodiversity conservation through funding provided by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Following a joint planning meeting between WESCANA Regional Office and the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN Med) it was agreed that WESCANA would continue to delegate responsibility for project implementation in North Africa to IUCN Med, and that both offices would seek to build on existing collaboration based on the inherent capacities of each office. Agreement was reached that the efforts of both should focus on building up sub-regional status and programme implementation in North Africa.

The third and last phase of the North Africa Biodiversity Programme (NABP) was implemented in all five countries (2001-2004), under the management of the IUCN Med. A main focus for the North Africa Biodiversity Programme has been the conservation of endangered and economically useful medicinal and aromatic plants by identifying and conserving this important resource, safeguarding the traditional knowledge related to its benefits, and promoting its sustainable use through community involvement.

- **Central Asia Sub-region:**

The Central Asia sub-region includes the countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (an area of almost 4 million sq km and a population of 57 million people). This sub-region has significant environmental, political, and economic difficulties due to the dramatic impact on the natural environment that the sub-region was subject to in the second half of the 20th century. Following independence in 1991, all of these countries are dealing with a difficult period of economic and political transition. One consequence is the growing incidence of poverty. This creates an urgent need for environmental management linked directly to the regions development and human livelihoods agenda.

Being at the crossroads between Asia, South Asia and Europe, this is an area of extremely high biodiversity, and has been recognized as one of the world's "Centers of Plant Domestication".

As in other parts of IUCN WESCANA, water resource management is a central issue. The unsustainable use of water resources has had significant impacts on basins of the Caspian and Aral Seas, and on the biodiversity associated with these ecosystems and the communities who depend on their resources.

The priority areas for programme development and implementation are:

- Protected Areas along with their role in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development
- Ecosystem management (particularly in the context of freshwater resources)
- Natural Resource Governance and Environmental Law
- Building capacity, partnerships, and knowledge for sustainable development and sustainable natural resource use

One of the major long-term challenges is to address the issue of co-operation between the different countries in this region, and to develop the mechanisms to encourage "regional" thinking and co-operation on issues that affect the entire region. Efforts are being made to balance work at the country level with the need to influence the regional scale, and to develop networks of information sharing and co-operation to move the regional agenda forward.

### **The WESCANA programme:**

Through an extensive participatory process that involved all WESCANA members, commissions and councilors during 1999-2004 the following main regional programme themes were identified.

- Biodiversity
- Drylands and desertification
- Water
- Marine and Coastal ecosystems
- Protected Areas
- Environmental law
- Education and communication
- Equity and sustainability.

The programme areas were transformed into a regional programme outcomes and strategic planning

### **1.1.2 The WESCANA Regional Office:**

The WESCANA regional office was relocated to the area and opened in 2004. The regional office opted for a "programme focused" approach for enhanced delivery in a wide and complex region. The WESCANA office has developed four programmes. Some of them have been relatively advanced in the last three years while others are still nascent. The existing working current programmes are:

- 1- Water Programme.
- 2- Protected Area Programme.
- 3- Communication Programme.

The planned new programmes are:

- 1- Marine programme

- 2- Environmental law programme
- 3- Gender and social equity programme

## **1.2 IUCN WESCANA Programmes:**

### **1.2.1 Evolution of the IUCN programme**

### **1.2.2 Current Focus areas and programmes:**

As mentioned in section 1.1.1 IUCN WESCANA regional office is currently coordinating the implementation of three working programmes from the list of 8 priority focus areas identified through the IUCN WESCANA planning process. The main features of the three existing programmes are:

#### **Protected Areas Programme:**

One of the key concerns within the IUCN WESCANA region is the lack of a representative network of Protected Areas that are effectively managed (PAs). PAs help to conserve key elements of biodiversity, play a significant role in social and economic development, and embody many practical approaches to participatory and collaborative management.

One of the objectives of the IUCN WESCANA Protected Areas Programme is to guide and enhance the development of adequate regional approaches and models for effective PA management, with a focus on community participation and involvement at all levels.

Another objective is to build the region's capacity in PA management, including the development of sound, and regionally adequate guidelines and mechanisms. To this end we will draw on the diverse body of global knowledge and expertise available through the IUCN network

To further these objectives we also aim to support the regional World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) network in achieving its mission, objectives, and outputs.

Some of the tangible results sought by this programme include:

- A network of country based models and pilot sites for collaborative management of PAs and NR developed and sustained.
- Lessons learned and mechanisms from models and pilot sites documents, fed into national and regional PA policies and legislations and shared among all partner in the region.
- A set of regionally reviewed and appropriate guidelines and management tools developed, translated and utilized with the participation of all stakeholders.
- A comprehensive regional/sub-regional training programme devised and implemented based on adequate analysis of existing initiatives and needs assessment.
- An effective PA programme unit at IUCN WESCANA as an integral component of the regional office developed.

- Effective linkages with WCPA regional network established and maintained.
- Country based initiatives with IUCN members and partners on PAs and community based management explored, funded and effectively implemented.

- **Water Programme:**

IUCN WESCANA has begun to provide resources and training to regional and country public officials and policy makers to facilitate the development of regulatory frameworks for water management in the various member countries, and to offer a platform for debate to improve coordination and the sharing of experiences between these countries. This initiative is a starting point for promoting good water governance in the region and in assisting countries to strengthen their national capacities to revise existing and/or adopt new legal frameworks for the management of water resources in a sustainable manner.

- **Communications Programme:**

The critical objective of the IUCN WESCANA Communications Programme is to reinforce the unique mission and position of IUCN WESCANA, and to assist in moving the environmental and development agendas of the IUCN WESCANA vision, and the goals of our various sub-regions and thematic programmes, by actively promoting the dissemination and sharing of knowledge.

- **Gender equity and poverty alleviation:**

The IUCN WESCANA office has developed its conceptual framework for a regional programme on gender equity and poverty alleviation. The challenge is to ensure the development of a strategy that is sufficiently broad-based to be applicable to each member state, and yet is also sufficiently specific to respond to the diversity of local ecological, social and economic conditions. The challenge is significant and the timing critical: across the region, most member countries are off-track on the achievement of 2015 MDG targets for poverty, gender and environment. In many WESCANA countries the situation is actually deteriorating. Only concerted and focused action will help reverse this trend. In response to these challenges, IUCN WESCANA is adopting a two-fold approach.

The conceptual framework states that the objectives of gender equity, poverty alleviation and social inclusion need to be fully considered and integrated into their own institutional policies, systems and processes.

IUCN WESCANA will play a proactive role in operationalising integrated sustainable development in its regional programmes of nature conservation. This will involve explicit consideration of gender equity and poverty alleviation at all stages of the project planning cycle, with targets, indicators and a commitment to monitor progress and assess impact. This will help demonstrate how the three issues are interconnected and how the integrated approach delivers synergies that add value to conservation initiatives.

IUCN WESCANA has identified some priority areas where members can work together on joint projects. The identification of the priority areas is based on critical factors: they have the

ability to generate quick impact and win-win results, build on existing members strengths, are attractive to donors, and are relevant across the WESCANA region.

- Fair Trade
- Medicinal and aromatic plants
- Sustainable development : participatory sub-national planning processes

## **Section II. From Global to Regional Planning:**

### **2.1 IUCN Global Situation Analysis:**

IUCN's draft global situation analysis draft was released in December 2006 and is currently being revised and reviewed in an open and participatory manner. The conceptual framework of the global situation analysis is based on the "ecosystem goods and services" delivery that was developed by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

Starting from a biodiversity perspective, the global situation analysis noted that although the world's economic well being is being improved the status of global biodiversity is declining. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (2006) and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005) documented declines in all biomes and across taxa with the most serious issues noted in islands, dry forests, polar and marine environments.

The analysis further states that the impact of climate change on biodiversity is becoming increasingly evident at both ecosystem and species levels while the direct impacts on national economies are also now recognized. The report argues that growing political attention and acceptance of climate change as a threat that can be addressed in a cost-effective manner is an important vehicle through which to generate support for biodiversity conservation.

The report also states that the link between conservation and human well-being, while more widely recognized, has not yet been articulated in a manner that is accepted by decision makers. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment provides a new perspective, based on the delivery of ecosystem services that can be used to more convincingly express and implement IUCN's commitment to both conservation and development.

Over the past two decades, IUCN has increasingly sought to strengthen the link between biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. IUCN's core contributions remain in the realms of knowledge generation and mobilization and in convening and influencing societies to improve governance to support the linked objectives of conservation and human well-being.

The report identified the following issues as existing and emerging challenges for supporting development and biodiversity conservation at the global level:

- Habitat change and degradation
- Climate change and extreme weather events
- Over-exploitation of natural resources

- Invasive species
- Pollution

The report identified the following as "underlying challenges" for addressing the loss of biodiversity:

- Population growth and demography.
- Gender.
- Globalization and global politics. (Security and conflict)
- Global economy. (Markets and finance).
- Economic valuation of biodiversity.

Some critical emerging issues were also identified in the global situation analysis report:

- Energy and biodiversity.
- Health and biodiversity.
- Agriculture.
- Impact of biotechnology (GMOs).

## **2.2 An Insight from the Global Programme:**

IUCN is currently implementing the programme 2005-2008 that was endorsed in the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conservation Congress in Bangkok in 2004. The programme is structured around three main strategic pillars: knowledge, empowerment and governance.

The programme has identified IUCN's niche as following:

- A convenor of civil society and governments to develop unified approaches, partnerships and forums, including with the business community, for collective action for conservation.
- A reliable and credible knowledge-based global network that works for the conservation of nature and natural resources.

According to the programme IUCN will integrate, manage and disseminate conservation-related knowledge; build the capacity of people and institutions to plan, manage, conserve and use nature and natural resources in a sustainable and equitable manner (empowerment); and promote effective environmental governance at global, regional, national and local levels.

More specifically, actions related to each pillar are:

### 1- **Knowledge:**

- Recognize, respect and promote dialogue between different knowledge systems.
- Promote the integration of traditional, local and scientific knowledge in the management and conservation of natural resources.
- Promote and facilitate the exchange of knowledge across the world and from a site to site and from a country to country.

### 2- **Empowerment:**

- Education, training and skill development.
- Raising awareness and building capacity
- Facilitating exchange of experiences
- Providing opportunities for all stakeholders to participate in decision making.

### 3- **Governance:**

- Transparency: openness in decision making.
- Access to information and justice- accurate, effective and open communication.
- Public participation.
- Coherence in approach.
- Subsidiarity: decisions taken at the lowest level appropriate.
- Respect for human rights
- Accountability for social, economic and environmental performance.
- Rule of law.

The programme is developed through 26 global ‘results’ clustered in six ‘Key Result Areas’ (KRAs):

**KRA 1: Understanding Biodiversity** – IUCN will build on its ability to generate and disseminate knowledge about natural systems and the species that inhabit them.

**KRA 2: Social Equity** – IUCN will promote better understanding of the role of social equity in biodiversity conservation.

**KRA 3: Conservation Incentives and Finance** – IUCN will emphasize sharing knowledge of incentives and financing mechanisms for supporting effective biodiversity conservation.

**KRA 4: International Agreements, Processes and Institutions for Conservation** – IUCN will use the knowledge generated in KRAs 1, 2, 3 and 5 to promote and support effective, efficient and equitable environmental governance at regional and global levels, including through intergovernmental fora and corporate social responsibility processes.

**KRA 5: Ecosystems and Sustainable Livelihoods** – IUCN will apply the knowledge generated in KRAs 1, 2, 3 and 4 to promote sustainable and efficient management of ecosystems, integrating social, economic and environmental aims at local, national and transboundary levels.

**KRA 6: Programme Delivery** – IUCN will build and maintain the systems for the Union to deliver an effective and efficient Programme through its Commissions, Secretariat and members.

The programme is built around the interconnected three pillars of sustainability. It argues that IUCN is first and foremost a conservation organization. However, to be successful, conservation efforts need to address both the direct causes of biodiversity loss and the related underlying causes of unsustainability. Likewise, sustainable development cannot be achieved in isolation from ensuring economic wellbeing, environmental health or addressing social development goals.

The programme has identified four causes of unsustainability in global development, which are:

- 1- Human population dynamics.
- 2- Consumption patterns.
- 3- Market failures and policy distortions.
- 4- Wealth, poverty and inequity.

### **2.3 A look into the 2009-2012 Programme:**

IUCN global programme has started its strategic planning process for the development of the draft 2009-2012 programme that will be endorsed in the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conservation Congress in Barcelona 2008.

The main elements of the new programme were recently revealed in IUCN's workshop on output monitoring held in Malaga in April 2007.

Figure 1 indicates that IUCN is maintaining its three strategic lines and value chains (knowledge, empowerment and governance). Figure 2 provides a conceptual analysis of the central role of biodiversity conservation (core IUCN objective) in relation to other socio-economic trends and sectors. Based on that, figure 3 provides an overall look at the way IUCN is planning to locate biodiversity as the main Key Result Area surrounded by other 4 KRAs that represent the main elements of economic and social policies.

It can be concluded, at first impression that IUCN programme 2009-2012 will be re-oriented to adapt IUCN's niche in global environmental governance system by providing engagement in the direct linkages between biodiversity and major economic activities (energy, climate change, poverty, security and market mechanisms). This will entail a certain paradigm shift in IUCN philosophy and management tools that will remain to be assessed in the next rounds of consultations leading to the WCC in 2008.

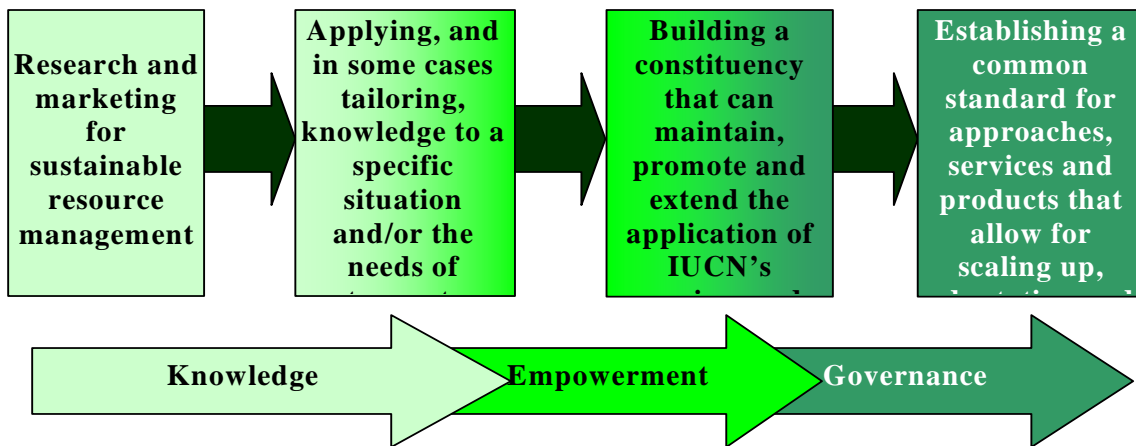


Figure 1: IUCN's Value Chain linked to IUCN's approach to Change

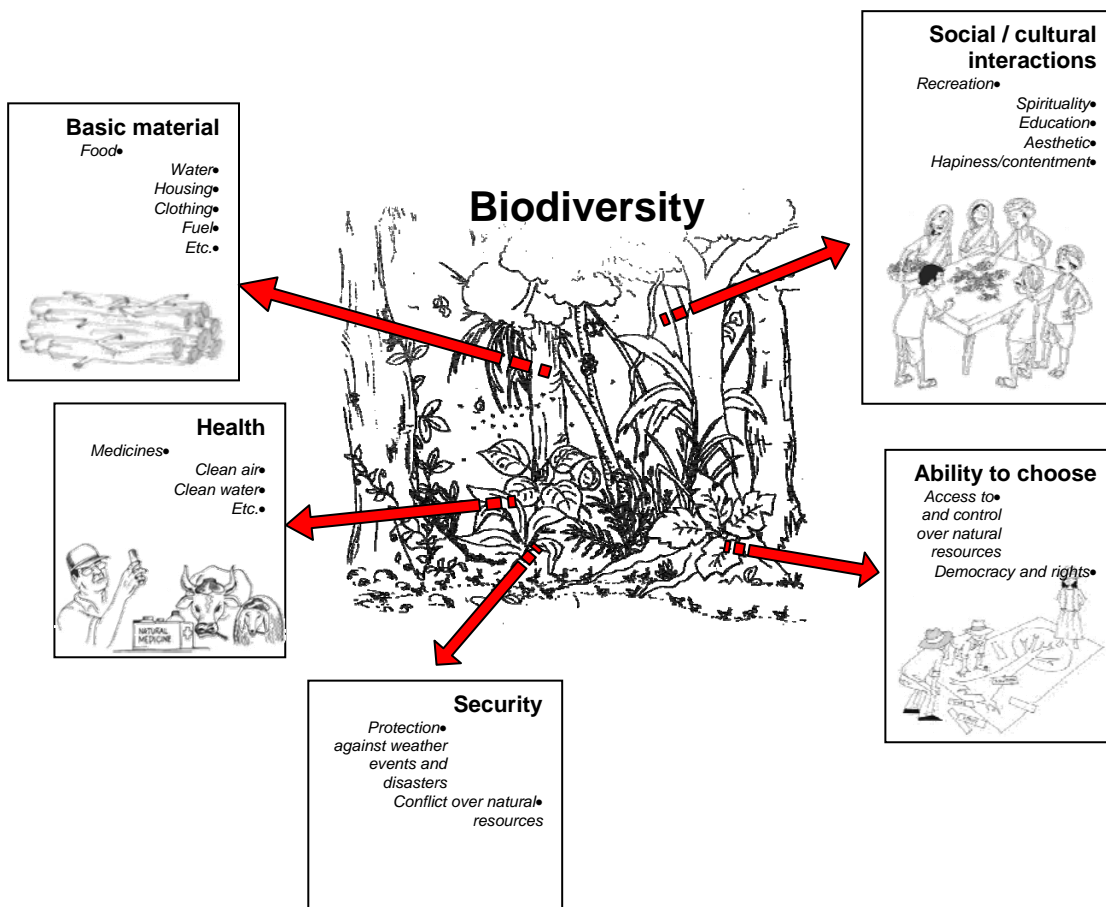


Figure 2: The Central role of biodiversity in socio-economic development

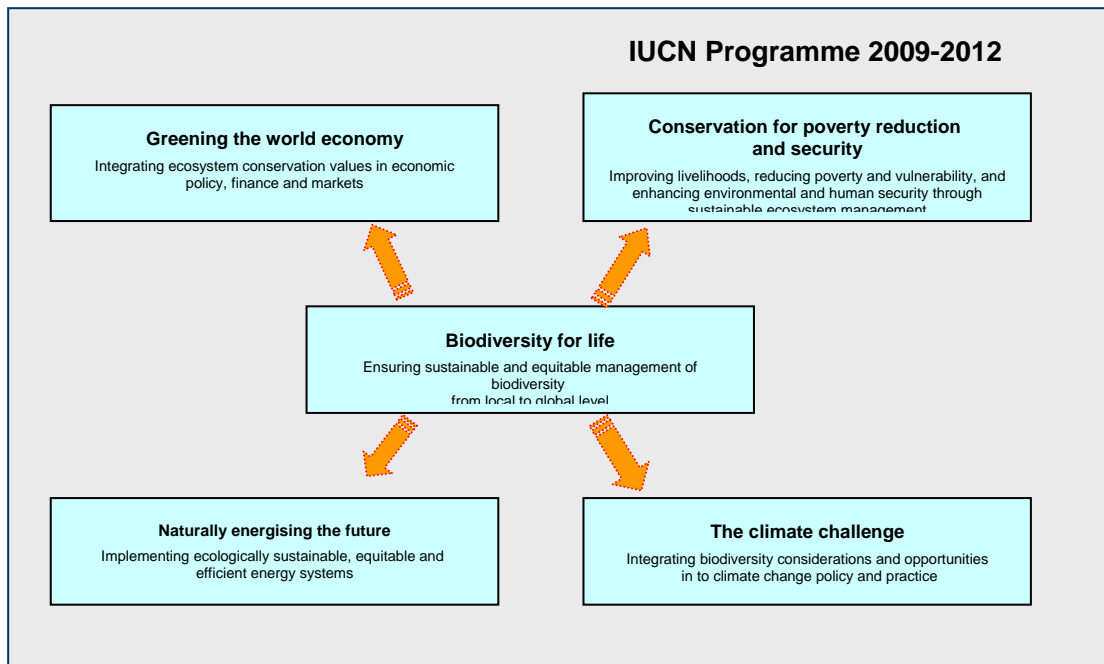


Figure 3: The suggested main KRAs for IUCN programme 2009-2012

## 2.4 Monitoring and Evaluation System:

IUCN is currently working on enhancing its monitoring and evaluation system by introducing output monitoring systems to measure the success of IUCN programme. Some of the main elements for monitoring and evaluation are:

- 1- Integration of measurable outcomes in the intersessional programmes that includes results and impacts.
- 2- Monitoring will be done against the planned outcomes at the global, regional and thematic levels.
- 3- Projects implemented by IUCN should be directly linked to the programme and to be measured against it and contribute to the success of the programme.
- 4- IUCN business strategy must strike a balance between responding to donors' requirements (priorities) and the delivery of the IUCN programme.

## 2.5 WESCANA Responding to situation Analysis:

### 2.5.1 WESCANA Situation Analysis update 2006:

In 2006 a brief questionnaire was sent out to all regional and global thematic component programmes to provide updates on the situation analysis that had been undertaken prior to planning for the intersessional programme 2005-2008. Five questions relating to both internal and external changes were posed:

**1-What are the major changes in the human and ecosystem wellbeing for your theme or region?**

West Asia's response for this question was related to the "democratic reform" process that was initiated in 2004 which was described as a major economic and political change. In Central Asia the transition period from Soviet rule has reached a more acute phase with higher tensions resulting from extreme social inequalities/increasing poverty incidence. Extreme weather conditions were reported from Pakistan.

**2- What are the major (and previously unanticipated) policy changes that affect your theme or region?**

No specific answers from WESCANA were documented.

**3- What are the major challenges posed by your stakeholder constituency (Members, partners, etc) for your theme or region?**

Major emphasis at the global level was evident on the implementation of resolutions. Other issues included capacity development for members and new and evolving partnerships.

**4- Has there been any major reorientation (positive or negative) with regard to how donors view your region or them?**

Global consensus was evident on the fact that the current political emphasis on development and poverty alleviation strategies has made donors more reluctant to fund environmental projects which appear to be disconnected from the poverty and development agendas. In addition, issues of international security regarding terrorism and disasters have also had an impact on establishment of new priorities for donors

It has been noted also that some donors are continuing to withdraw from some WESCANA countries (Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt). In Central Asia the major western donor agencies are in a state of flux given the current situation. This situation is being addressed in emerging strategy to mix an IUCN approach of country specific donor focus, with sub-regional partnership with the NGO Central Asia Regional Environment Centre that has donor credibility.

**5-Describe any internal changes to your component programme that may trigger a reorientation.**

The main global responses were related to staffing capacity, strategic planning, re-structuring and decentralization and collaborative planning which all seem to be adequately identified in WESCANA as well.

**2.5.2 Situation Analysis Survey:**

During the preparation of this draft situation analysis a short survey was sent to IUCN member to solicit their feedback on some strategic orientation issues. A small number of

responses was received before preparation of this draft and more are hoped for in the next days.

The main added value for IUCN was seen as the global network and knowledge system which was expressed in many responses. One response stated that IUCN has yet to provide an added value in the region.

The most important socio-economic driving forces were considered to be poverty, excessive use of natural resources, population growth and business impact on biodiversity. Main environmental driving forces were deforestation, excessive use of water resources, marine dredging, desertification and poor management of PAs.

In selecting the suggested strategic priorities for 2009-2012 respondent IUCN members focused on capacity building, education and communication, dryland management, marine parks development, protected areas management and water management.

### **Section III. WESCANA Situation Analysis 2007:**

*This draft section will be further detailed after the expert group meeting*

#### **3.1 Socio-economic Trends**

A recently published World Bank report (2007) entitled "Economic Development Prospects" stated that the West Asia and North Africa (MENA) region has witnessed a substantial economic growth when measured by the GDP in the last three years. The overall situation provided by the report claims that job creation has increased and unemployment has declined due to the increased role of the private sector. The report is able to caution that not all countries are benefiting during this remarkable period of expansion.

The report states that real GDP increased by 6.3 percent in 2006, up from 4.6 percent during the first four years of the decade. Statistically, the region's growth performance in 2006 was one of its best since the 1970s. Growth in 2006 was driven by the continued strong momentum of *resource-rich, labor-importing* countries and the improved performance of *resource-poor, labor-abundant* countries, while growth in *resource-rich, labor-abundant* countries stagnated at about the levels reached in 2005.

The current pace of growth has narrowed the gap in per capita income growth between MENA and other developing regions. Over the second half of the 1990s, growth of real per capita income averaged 1.7 percent in MENA. That level was 61 percent of the growth attained by low and middle-income developing countries as a whole. By 2006, MENA's real per capita income was growing at nearly 75 percent of the aggregate rate.

In contrast to the strong regional growth performance, industrial production turned from gains of 4.1 percent in 2005 to a decline of 0.4 percent in 2006, largely as output of hydrocarbons faced capacity constraints. Among the *resource-rich, labor-abundant* countries, industrial production declined by 2.3 percent in 2006. For *resource-rich, labor-importing* countries, the decline was moderate, at 1.1 percent during the year. In contrast, industrial production accelerated in *resource-poor, labor-abundant* countries to 3.5 percent.

Despite the downturn in oil production and the turnaround in the world oil price from peaks of more than \$70 per barrel in August 2006, revenues for the oil exporters continued to build. Hydrocarbon receipts in 2006 rose by more than \$75 billion over the 2005 figure, reaching

\$510 billion. Surplus funds among the oil exporters and the availability of new investment opportunities across the region (some generated by ongoing reforms) boosted flows of foreign direct investment (FDI) to new highs of more than \$24 billion in 2006. FDI in the past year was concentrated in the region's *resource-poor* countries (except Djibouti), where the share of FDI in GDP quadrupled from 2004. FDI also was high in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Domestic demand continues to be the main source of growth in the region, but investment has risen markedly. The contribution of gross domestic investment to GDP growth almost doubled in 2006, from 2.6 to 4.1 GDP growth points. In addition, private investment as a share of GDP has been increasing signaling a shift toward more private-sector led growth.

The report concludes that several factors are likely to shape the profile for growth in the MENA region over the medium term. The external environment is expected to be fairly conducive during 2007–09. At the same time, domestic conditions will vary decidedly across the region, as will efforts at reform. The flux of political tensions could affect the confidence of global and regional investors as well as oil-market conditions. On the other hand, if conflicts were to subside the peace dividend could be significant, boosting growth prospects, incomes, and development.

Despite the positive elements contained in this report, other indicators are worrisome.

UNEP states that More than two-thirds of the population lives in low-income countries and 70 million live under the poverty line. The average unemployment rate in the region is 22% (up to 60% in Gaza and the West Bank) but is highly varied between countries. Informal settlements surround major urban centres in the region and continue to expand.

Moreover, income equality is still an issue of concern in some countries, with a widening gap between rural and urban areas and the rich and poor in urban centres. Traditional economic growth approaches, foreign debt, structural adjustment and increasing trends towards globalisation have also contributed to exacerbating poverty in the Region.

Decentralization arrangements have been pursued in certain countries to strengthen local ownership of planning and implementation of development strategies and programs. However, more capacity building is needed to train local and national officials in analytical and management tools, as well as in collecting the necessary data to prepare and implement plans. Indeed, while the legal and institutional framework is gradually being strengthened in terms of land use planning, however implementation and enforcement still lag behind. The formulation of databases and efforts to narrow the digital gap through information support systems could help to overcome these constraints.

The overall socio-economic situation in the WESCAN region causes a number of driving factors that will have direct impacts on the environmental situation in the coming few years:

- Population growth and dynamics.
- Trade and globalization.
- Poverty and income inequality.
- Over consumption of natural resources.
- Quest for political and social reform.
- Development of science and technology.
- Conflicts and deterioration of security.

- Finance and investment in sustainable technologies.

The detailed impacts of such factors will be analysed after the Expert Group meeting to link them with the actual thematic programmes that will be selected as priority linkages.

## **3.2 Environmental trends**

### **3.2.1 Freshwater:**

Freshwater scarcity is one of the major common features of WESCANA. Indeed, the region is one of the world's most water scarce and the per capita share of water availability has been reduced to a staggering 90 cubic meter/ day in some countries (Jordan, Palestine) with an average of 900 cubic meters/day in the whole region.

In April 2007 the World Bank has published a comprehensive report on water scarcity in MENA. The report states that Per capita water availability will fall by half by 2050, with serious consequences for the region's already stressed aquifers and natural hydrological systems. As the region's economies and population structures change over the next few decades, demands for water supply and irrigation services will change accordingly, as will the need to address industrial and urban pollution. Some 60 percent of the region's water flows across international borders, further complicating the resource management challenge. Finally, rainfall patterns are predicted to shift as a result of climate change.

The report predicts that drinking water services will become more erratic than they are already, cities will come to rely more and more on expensive desalination and during droughts will have to rely more frequently on emergency supplies brought by tanker or barge. Service outages will put stress on expensive network and distribution infrastructure. In irrigated agriculture, unreliable water services will depress farmers' incomes. The economic and physical dislocation associated with the depletion of aquifers or unreliability of supplies will increase and local conflicts could intensify. All of this will have short- and long-term effects on economic growth and poverty, will exacerbate social tensions within and between communities, and will put increasing pressure on public budgets. This report aims to suggest ways in which, within their current political and economic realities, countries can make changes to lessen these problems.

In response to such challenges governments in some cities have shifted from direct provision of water supply services to regulation of services provided by independent or privately owned utilities. In many countries across the region, farmers have begun managing irrigation infrastructure and water allocations. Some governments have established agencies to plan and manage water at the level of the river basin.

The report states that people and economies remain vulnerable to droughts and floods; over-extraction of groundwater is undermining national assets at rates equivalent to 1 to 2 percent of GDP every year in some countries; and environmental problems related to water costs between 0.5 and 2.5 percent of GDP every year. Many countries have local experiences with improving accountability and stakeholder involvement in decision making about water

management and services, through involving users in planning and service delivery decisions as well as by collecting and publishing data on water outcomes.

Although water management in WESCANA has been more "integrated" in the decade, a lot of work still needs to be done to introduce and practice the connectivity of ecosystems in nature and the ecosystem approach in water management at the basin level with clear linkages to the hydrological cycle and maintaining basic water flow in ecosystems to provides natural services.

In the Gulf countries, rapid population growth and urbanization and the rise in per capita water consumption have all resulted in more water scarcity. With an average consumption of 300-750 liters/capita/day they rank among the highest in the world. However virtually all this water is coming from expensive desalination plants. Agricultural sector however is the main water consumer in the region with about 70% of total water use. This is continuing to exert pressure on water resources.

In West Asia and Yemen health impacts of poor water quality are a major concern. The main reasons are the use of untreated domestic wastewater for irrigation, poor sanitation and inadequate water management. Overexploitation of groundwater has resulted in drying of main springs and aquifers.

Access to sanitation services and wastewater treatment has gradually improved. Appropriate sanitation schemes exist in most metropolitan centres of high-income countries in the region. Notable progress has been achieved in treated wastewater recycling, especially in severely water scarce countries. Several countries (e.g., Egypt, Jordan and Gulf states), have integrated wastewater reuse into their national water schemes with emphasis on recycling industrial cooling water and reuse of treated municipal liquid waste for irrigation purposes. In support of these efforts, wastewater reuse regulations have been adopted.

### **3.2.2 Drylands and desertification:**

About 65-70% of the total land area of WESCANA is dryland. Not more than 15% is cultivated in best cases and the high population growth has exerted more pressure on agricultural land. This has been associated with the use of inappropriate technologies, irrigation systems and crops which all resulted in salinization and desertification.

Wind erosion, salinity and water erosion constitute the main threats behind land degradation.

UNEP draft GEO 4 concludes that inadequate land resource policies due to centralized governance, lack of public participation, low profile expertise and an arbitrary and single-oriented approach to planning all contribute to the increasing level of land degradation and desertification.

An environmental assessment of the relative distribution of suitability of lands for various agriculture practices by ACSAD has shown that 11% is suitable for agriculture (rainfall up to 400mm), 20% are semi dry to dry and marginal lands with rain fall ranging from 100-400 mm which is relatively suitable for agriculture; and 89% are areas with rainfall of less that 100mm which are mostly deserts or desertified areas suitable only for grazing. Most of these areas are threatened by desertification due to anthropogenic activities leading to desertification

including overgrazing. Overgrazing is responsible for about 26% of the desertification that is taking place, whereas 21% of the total area is threatened by desertification due to forest/shrub clearing operations, compared to 2% and 1% of the total area lost annually due to salinization and urban expansion respectively.

Rangelands constitute the major ecosystems prevailing in WESCANA. The impact of heavy grazing and plant uprooting has resulted in high deterioration of rangelands. It also resulted in reduction of drylands biodiversity. Currently considerable efforts are being experimented in WESCANA for the rehabilitation of degraded drylands with main emphasis placed on water management and harvesting systems in drylands.

Agriculture and food production remain a significant contributor to the national economy of most countries of the Arab Region averaging 12-13 percent of regional GDP. This belies the importance of agriculture as a significant driver impacting various aspects of sustainable development, namely labour, rural-to-urban migration, water use, land management, research and technology development, food security, as well as society and culture.

Although considerable efforts have been made by the countries of the Region to improve field management techniques, yet, most of the cropping patterns adopted under rain fed and irrigated conditions need to be developed along innovative trends.

Agricultural protectionism continues throughout the Region, as does heavy subsidisation of irrigation water (the primary user of freshwater in the Region) and agrochemicals, which has lead to unsustainable patterns of agricultural production. This has rendered the sector inefficient and particularly vulnerable to trade liberalisation agreements that seek to eliminate agricultural subsidies and reduce tariffs. However, reform in the agricultural sector depends also on progress made internationally through the WTO negotiations towards setting standards and norms on an equitable basis.

The appropriate management of rangeland, forest and other vegetative resources is essential in order to conserve biodiversity and prevent soil erosion by wind and water, as well as to maintain the inherent productivity of the resource base for future generations. Although considerable national efforts have been undertaken by the countries in the region, and by international, regional and sub-regional organizations, the problem of continuing land degradation and desertification is still a serious threat to the livelihoods

Following a series of meetings, the West Asian countries have indorsed on 2000 a SRAP to Combat Desertification and to mitigate the effect of Drought in West Asia to strengthen cooperation in the sub-region.

The SRAP focuses on two strategic domains, common to all member countries of the sub-region, which provide for effective sub-regional cooperation in addressing common problems and in promoting experience and innovation sharing between stakeholders. In strategic terms, water resources and their sustainable management are a key issue for the future development of the sub-region. Similarly, vegetative cover, particularly forests and rangelands, and its sustainable management are a key concern in combating land degradation. Accordingly, the SRAP operates through two thematic networks (TNs):

TN1: Sustainable Water Management

TN2: Sustainable Management of Vegetative Cover

### **3.2.3 Biodiversity and Protected Areas:**

Biodiversity in the Arab Region has exceptional value when considering the variability of ecological, chemical and genetic characters of the species “intraspecific diversity” which provides a wealthy stock of biological resources that can be utilized through biotechnology techniques to serve agricultural, medicinal and industrial purposes.

The unique and highly vulnerable biodiversity of the Arab Region is at serious risk from increased human activities. The main environmental issues of concern over biodiversity in the Arab Region are the degradation and/or destruction of habitats and the loss of species.

The underlying threats of biodiversity in the Region include population growth, agricultural and urban expansion to ecologically important areas, poverty and unsustainable use of biota, industrial pollution, and macro-scale stress such as drought. Mismanagement of rangelands, over-grazing, over fishing, hunting and hostilities have generated additional pressures.

As for the region’s protected areas, they remain faced by several main challenges summarized by the following:

Although the countries of the region invest quite significantly in protected areas, the region’s trend is still based on the expansion of areas declared as protected. There is little regional effort, with the exception of one or two country cases, where the whole issue of management effectiveness of protected areas is brought to the strategic and operational discussion levels.

Local community participation in the design and management of protected areas remain way below optimal levels not to mention unsatisfactory. Several regional attempts exist, with some good lessons learned and successes, to share more benefits derived from ecotourism and other socio economic programs with local communities. However, the whole need to involve local communities in the governance aspects and protected areas and decision making processes remain very limited. Further, no real efforts are made or clear strategies adopted for the analysis and reintroduction of traditional management knowledge and systems of natural resources and protected areas.

The region’s capacities for sound and effective management of protected areas are also suboptimal. Most existing capacities are related to conventional approaches and methodologies of protected areas management and little is done to learn more from local, regional and international best practices and success stories.

Communication, coordination and cooperation within the region on protected areas is one of its weakest points. Most programs are country driven. There is a real lack of effective fora for sharing experiences and knowledge. Total absence of trans-boundary cooperation and coordination is very evident and on top of all, very little international aid is provided to support and promote regional cooperation and networking in the fields of protected areas management.

### 3.2.4 Marine Ecosystems

To meet the growing demand for urbanization and recreational activities, dredging and land reclamation have been intensifying in most countries of the region. These trends will continue and intensify as new projects have been approved and executed.

Marine ecosystems in WESCANA are threatened with the boom in real estate development and infrastructure, especially in the Gulf countries. In Bahrain, the total area dredged is about 1,350ha and the area reclaimed is 900ha, resulting in adding about 39sqkm new land mass in less than 20 years by increasing the surface area from 661.87sqkm in 1975 to 700sqkm in 1994.

The threat posed by the real estate boom is in addition to the pressures resulting from oil spills, contamination from industrial sources and municipal releases, global warming, desalination and power plant discharges into the sea.

Gulf countries have already developed 40 per cent of the coastal line. For instance, 10km of the Omani coastline has been reclaimed with quarry and sand beach material. Nearly 60 million cubic metres of sediments were dredged during construction of the Saudi Bahrain coastal way.

In Kuwait, a considerable part of the intertidal area in front of Kuwait city and in areas on southern coast have been reclaimed. As a consequence, significant erosion problems have developed along most of the fill edges of the reclaimed areas. Recreation and tourism development have also expanded with the construction of new houses, marinas, resorts and luxury modern hotels. However, these include the creation of canals in the desert to supply beaches for individual houses, marine artificial lagoons and islands.

In the Red Sea Gulf of Aqaba in Jordan, the competition between maritime transport, industry and tourism has engulfed the majority of the short coastal area with only 7 Km left as a Marine Park.

Industry, agriculture, livestock production and food and beverage processing are the major sources of organic carbon and pollution dumped in coastal areas. Water discharge from desalination plants contribute to pollution as well. Oil spills and chemical contamination are also major threats to the region's marine environment.

The Marine environment is increasingly threatened by land-based sources of pollution. In some countries, the challenge is primarily from major rivers that discharge domestic and municipal wastes, agricultural chemicals, and hazardous industrial substances into the sea. While in the GCC countries, the challenges are from oil-related, industrial, and desalinization plants spills and discharges. Fish kill phenomena have been observed over the recent years along the North Western part of the Gulf including the Eastern Coast of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and some of the Iranian ports. Findings suggest that eutrophication manifested as red tides and depletion of oxygen as a probable causes.

Fisheries resources have become increasingly threaten by over-fishing, habitat destruction, and increased coastal and marine pollution emanating from land-based sources as well as increased ship traffic.

### **3.2.5 Energy:**

The majority of WESCANA countries are blessed with a huge availability of both conventional and renewable resources of energy. However the conventional sources will not last forever and have proven to be one of the causes of our environmental problems. It is clear therefore that in due time RE will play a substantial role in the world energy system, due to its inherent advantages such as mitigation of climate change, generation of employment and reduction of poverty, as well as increased energy security and supply. Several renewable energy technologies and applications are of relevance to countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). However, local and country-specific conditions including the availability of renewable energy resources, cost of conventional energy, capital cost of equipment, institutional availability and capability as well as other factors, influence the commercial viability of renewable energy technologies.

The potential of solar energy resources is excellent in all MENA countries with an annual global solar radiation varying between 4 to 8 kWh/m. The region also enjoys high direct normal radiation and low average cloud cover. Producing electricity from both concentrating solar thermal power (CSP) and photovoltaic (PV) has a good potential due to the fact that the incident solar radiation throughout the MENA region is higher than the required value. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) in particular is developing an ambitious programme for technology transfer and localization in relation to renewable energy.

The economics of wind energy has improved dramatically in the past few years, such that in many developed countries today, wind energy is now the least expensive option among all energy technologies. Several MENA countries such as Oman, Egypt, and Morocco have good wind energy resources (wind velocity range between 8-11 m/sec.).

Biomass energy is used widely in direct cooking in rural areas of MENA countries. Due to the semi-arid nature of MENA countries and the small amount of forest and agriculture residues, the biomass potential for MENA countries is available only from municipal waste but is expected to increase in efficiency. Several countries in MENA region particularly, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria have hydro resources. The potential of some of these countries are much higher than the power generated by this source.

In Egypt, renewable energy resources represent 11% of total energy supply in 2003. This may seem high, but if we exclude hydro and biomass wood, other renewable energies represent 0.1% of total energy supply. Solar water heating is currently used in residential, commercial and tourist hotels buildings with varying degrees of success. More than 500,000m of solar collectors have been installed so far. The total renewable energy generated power reached 2,929 MW (in 2003), 94% of which being large hydro. The rest is composed of 145 MW from wind, 36 MW from biomass, and 3 MW from PV. The renewable energy generated power represents 17.5% of the total electricity installed capacity and the renewable energy power generation was 13.2 TWh, representing about 15% of the total electricity generation..

In Jordan, more than 200,000 solar water heaters, 7 MW of hydro power (represent 0.68% of total electricity capacity), 1MW of pilot plant biomass (from municipal waste disposal) electricity generation are currently in operation. In addition to that 100 kWp of PV systems, twelve wind turbines projects with a total capacity of 1620 kW were demonstrated in many remote applications.

In Tunisia, the renewable energy resources represent 12% of the total energy supply which seems relatively high, however excluding biomass and large hydro, renewable energies represent only 1% of total the energy supply. Renewable energy utilization includes 110,000 m of solar water heaters installed with the help of GEF, 2 MW of PV systems, 20 MW of wind and 0.1 MW of biomass. In 2003, the total renewable energy based capacity was 85 MW, almost 74% of which being hydro (39% large hydro, and 35% small hydro). This represent around 3% of the total electricity installed capacity.

In Saudi Arabia, numerous R&D demonstration projects were conducted by the American-Saudi cooperation program (SOLERAS) during the last two decades of the previous century in the areas of solar cooling, solar desalination, solar thermal electricity and photovoltaic. Among these projects are 50 kW of solar thermal electricity & 400 kWp total of PV systems. Saudi is currently concentrating on energy efficiency and energy management.

In Morocco, renewable energy sources represent 25% of the total energy supply. This seems very high in comparison with other countries in the region. However excluding non-commercial biomass and large hydro, renewable energies represent only 0.1% of the total energy supply. A national solar water heater program called PROMASOL was launched in November 2000 to improve quality and encourage use of solar water heaters. The objective of this program is to increase the actual installed capacity (60,000 m ) to about 400,000 m, and it is also planning to build 50 MW solar thermal plant. The total renewable energy electricity generation installed capacity reached 1324 MW, more than 93% of which being large hydro. The rest is composed of 30 MW small hydro (2.5%), 53 MW wind (4%), and 3 MW PV (0.5%).

One of the most important trends that may require close environmental auditing is the approach supported by many countries in WESCANA for the adoption of nuclear energy technologies for electricity and desalination purposes. Countries like Egypt, Jordan and Yemen have declared high interest and started drawing up future plans for nuclear energy development.

### **3.2.6 Business and Environment:**

Industrial development remains as a vital component of the development processes of the WESCANA Region providing an important source of national income through trade, creating jobs and adding to the value of primary products. The interest of regional industry in the preventive approach to control environmental pollution has been rising continuously; and there is a detectable trend of shifting from end-of-pipe treatment to more proactive methodologies including cleaner production and at-source waste minimization.

Voluntary initiatives in industry including EMS, Corporate Citizenship, Global Compact, Global Reporting Initiatives, Responsible Care and the WSSD International Sectoral Initiatives have also been gaining momentum among regional industrialists.

A gradual boom in environmental business is occurring in some of the Gulf countries, especially in Saudi Arabia and UAE with regards to cleaner production and waste recycling as well as some initiative in sustainable energy.

### **3.2.7 Climate Change:**

The impact of Climate Change on WESCANA region has not been fully documented in one assessment, but the information to be extrapolated from the IPCC 2007 reports indicate that the region will suffer from a variety of impacts included decreased land productivity, reduced rainfall, extreme weather events and loss of species.

WESCANA countries need to embark on a comprehensive plan for adaptation to climate change with special focus on the impacts on marine and coastal areas, biodiversity, drylands and desertification and water resources.

## **Section IV. Expected Future Trends and IUCN Priorities:**

By analyzing the conceptual framework of the global IUCN programme and linking it to the regional settings, the following statements can be concluded:

- 1- The global value chain of knowledge, empowerment and governance is still valid and will remain to be the strategic pillars for the future programme.
- 2- IUCN WESCANA regional programme is still in a phase of development and impacts are to be recorded in the core thematic areas of biodiversity and protected areas, water, drylands and marine ecosystems. The four thematic programmes will remain as the focused basis of the future WESCANA programme.
- 3- Cross-cutting issues (education and communication, gender and equity, governance and poverty) will need to be integrated into the WESCANA programme by linkages to the four thematic programmes.
- 4- Emerging environmental and socio-economic driving factors have been identified at both the global and regional levels and will need to be introduced to the IUCN WESCANA programme. Main new emerging issues are climate change, business and biodiversity, capacity building and security.

According to this analysis, the IUCN WESCANA programme for 2009-2012 can be built around four focused thematic programmes to ensure maximum impact with the current capacity. The thematic programmes can be viewed in figure 4.

### **1- Biodiversity and Protected Areas:**

The two existing programmes could be combined in one to increase the integration and maximize the impact. This is one of the most advanced WESCANA programmes and represents the core of IUCN identity.

### **2- Drylands and desertification:**

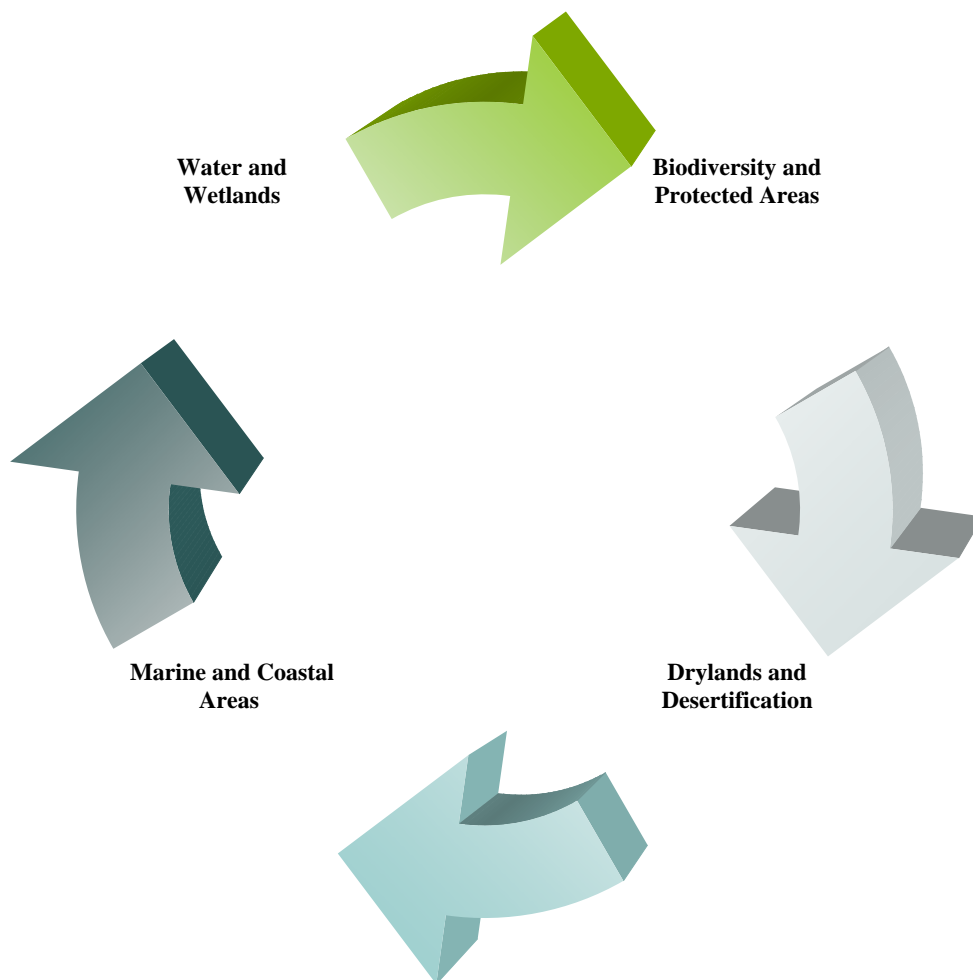
The main environmental common features of WESCANA and maybe the most pressing problem. The programme should be more linked with the UNCCD and has a practical role. WESCANA should promote this programme as the area where conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems will be won or lost in the region. Emphasis should remain despite the reduction of global financing mechanism dedicated to desertification.

### **3- Water and Wetlands:**

Water remains as the most limiting factor for development in the region. The emerging WESCANA water programme promises a lot of possibilities.

### **4- Marine and Coastal Areas:**

A special priority in North Africa and West Asia in particular, especially with the emerging economic development in the Gulf coastal zone. WESCANA is already initiating a marine programme in the region.



**Figure 4: Proposed IUCN WESCANA focused core programmes**

**Embedded elements:**

Based on the three global strategic pillars of the IUCN programme, WESCANA programme for 2009-2012 can make sure that the elements of communication and education and capacity building be embedded in each of the four thematic focus programmes. This will place WESCANA to provide measurable impacts in knowledge and empowerment in each of its thematic programmes and ensure the coherence with the global strategic pillars. Figure 5 presents an illustration of the embedded programmes.

As the capacity of the IUCN WESCANA programme is still developing, the strategic pillar (governance) will not be embedded in each focus programme but will be linked to one or two programmes within the linkages framework with cross-cutting issues.

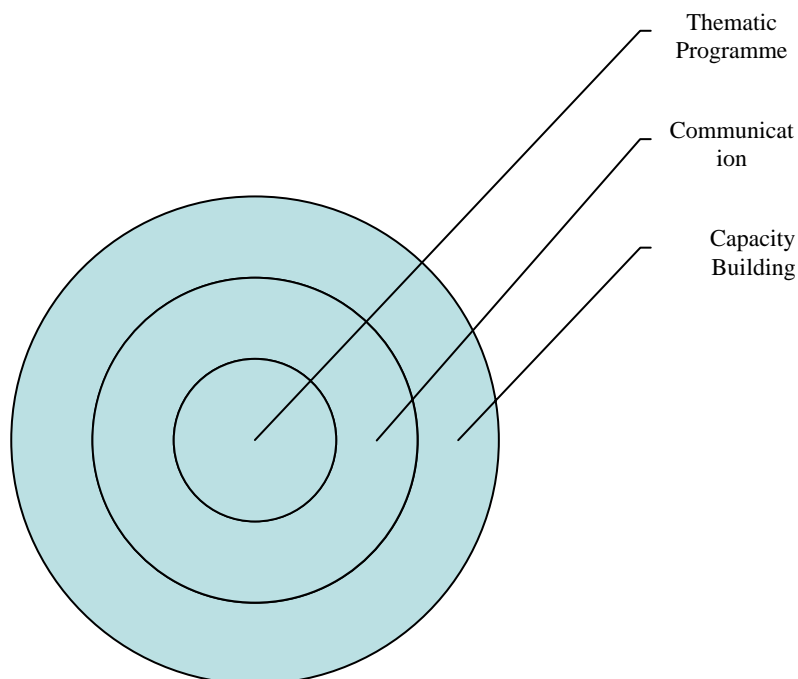


Figure 5: The integration of communication and capacity building elements in each IUCN WESCANA thematic programme

**Linkages with cross-cutting issues:**

A variety of cross cutting issues was identified as priority interventions for IUCN WESCANA and the global programme and will remain to be relevant in the coming programme cycle. These cross-cutting issues can be linked to the four thematic programmes via integrating a component of the cross-cutting issue into one or two of the four thematic programmes.

IUCN membership can conduct an exercise to select the direct linkages between the cross cutting issues and thematic issues based on relevance, capacity and potential for impact. Examples can include water and governance, biodiversity and adaptation to climate change, drylands and poverty and marine ecosystems and environmental economics.

Figure 6 provides an overview of the linkages between the cross-cutting issues and the thematic programmes

**1- Environmental Governance:**

This element can expand WESCANA's Regional office influence through advocacy to state members at the policy, legislative and capacity building levels especially with regards to negotiations in the MEAs. The environmental governance remains a highly relevant component especially with the WESCANA Regional Office affiliation with the Arab League.

## **2- Poverty, equity and sustainability:**

Poverty has been identified by IUCN as a common socio-economic challenge that should be linked to conservation programmes. It is one of the most stressing limitations in WESCANA and the credibility of any conservation programme will always be tested with its impact on poverty and sustainable livelihoods.

## **3- Climate Change adaptation:**

The most important global environmental issue now and for the next few decades. Also a real source of "environmental revolution" in practices and policies with a lot of financial resources available. The best entry point for IUCN WESCANA will be adaptation and vulnerability of ecosystems to climate change. IUCN can take the leading role in adaptation and vulnerability at the regional level since there are no adequate competitors. Most of the GEF resources for the next few years will be allocated to Climate Change adaptation measures.

## **4- Environmental Economics:**

A highly important and growing discipline. IUCN can provide a leading role in designing economic valuation methods for natural resources and ecosystem services and goods in the region. In addition IUCN can link business and conservation as well as providing economic incentives for conservation methods

## **5- Environmental Security:**

This programme has always been on the periphery of IUCN's programme in WESCANA but is proving to be vital now. Around 25% of the population of WESCANA countries is facing environmental security problems and it is probable that WESCANA is the most environmentally insecure region in the whole world.

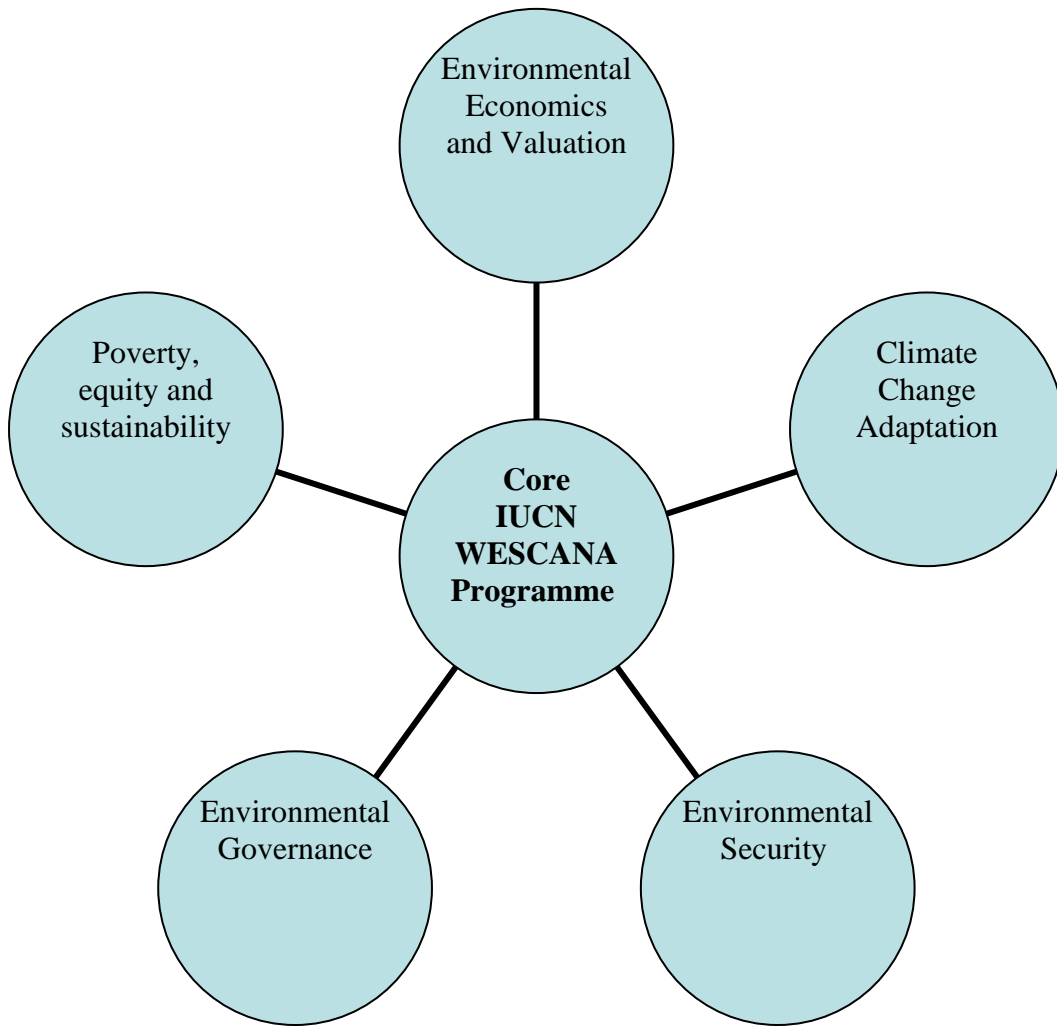


Figure 6: Linkages between core programmes and cross-cutting issues

## **Section V. Stakeholders Analysis:**

**To be prepared based on the focused approach after the EGM.**