

(Statement to the IUCN)

July 10, 2012

URGENT MEMO TO :

All Leadership, of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

FROM :

Undersigned 55 civic groups in Korea

If you have questions, contact to :

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Statement to the IUCN and the World Conservation Congress

We, civic environmental groups in South Korea, denounce the IUCN and the World Conservation Congress that have overlooked and misrepresented environmental and social conflicts in South Korea

1. In September 2012, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) will organize the World Conservation Congress (WCC) at ICC JEJU in Jeju Island, which is expected to be attended by more than 10,000 people from over 1,100 organizations in 180 countries.

We, civic environmental groups in South Korea, have a high regard for the international cooperation projects executed by the IUCN, which endeavor to help develop and implement policies that contribute to protecting the environment. We also recognize that IUCN is globally influential; the organization carries

significant weight over the registration of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, sets criteria regarding internationally endangered species and develops conservation plans.

We also respect the milestones achieved by the IUCN, including the Ramsar Convention in 1971; the World Conservation Strategy in 1978, which proposed the concept of “sustainable development”; the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992, and the Resolution on Biodiversity, passed at the 1996 World Conservation Congress in Montreal. In addition, we recognize that it was the IUCN which enabled numerous technological advancements which are currently in use in the field to protect biological ecosystems, such as the Technical Guidelines on the Management of *Ex-situ* populations for Conservation.

2. Meanwhile, the Lee Myung-Bak administration has destroyed four major rivers, continues to blindly pursue nuclear power, and continues to forcefully construct a naval base at Gangjeong village on Jeju Island, despite fierce opposition, both locally and nationally.

Against this backdrop, civic environmental groups and activists in South Korea continue to denounce the administration and are taking action against its destructive projects. We call for the South Korean government to halt its construction work at the four rivers and allow nature to reclaim it. We also oppose the Lee administration’s policy of promoting nuclear power under the guise of Green Growth and exporting it to the Third World. Furthermore, we are vehemently against the government’s execution of a plan to build a naval base on Jeju Island, which is destroying biodiversity and brutally violating human rights in the name of national security.

Given the above, civic environmental groups in South Korea state the following to the IUCN, the organizer of the World Conservation Congress (WCC) in 2012, and its Organizing Committee:

3. The World Conservation Congress will be held this year in South Korea, yet the Congress gravely neglects or misrepresents environmental and social conflicts in the host country. Because the Congress is financed by the Lee Myung-Bak administration and sponsored by industrial conglomerates, there is

growing public concern that the WCC is promoting policies of the Lee administration without examining whether they are truly designed to preserve the environment.

This year - 2012 - is the fifth, and last, year of President Lee's tenure, in which his administration is taking advantage of the WCC to justify his poor environmental, peace, and labor policies. The South Korean government is using the convention to advocate for its questionable "Low Carbon Green Growth" campaign, its appalling Four Major Rivers Restoration Project, as well as its policy of prioritizing nuclear power and favoring corporate construction conglomerates.

We are concerned that the IUCN Secretariat is not addressing any of the current environmental issues in South Korea among the themes for the upcoming WCC. Rather, Director General Julia Marton-Lefevre of IUCN faithfully endorses the Korean government and its dubious policies.

The Director General said "Korea's green growth policies and Four Major Rivers Restoration Project are the results of the efforts to ensure nature conservation and sustainable development" during a meeting with President Lee on June 4. In an interview with a Korean reporter, she described the rivers project as "reasonable."

4. We civic environmental groups of South Korea raise this question: Are members of the IUCN and its Director General aware of the grave implications of the Four Major Rivers Restoration Project?

Under the Lee administration, South Korean society has endured tremendous social tensions and environmental conflicts. The government has prioritized development at the expense of wreaking havoc on the environment and the health of its citizens.

For example, in 2008, the 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands was held in Korea. At that meeting, President Lee publicly declared to withdraw a plan to build a "Grand Canal" in Korea, only to re-allocate its budget to execute the Four Major Rivers Restoration Project, which has devastated the nation's four crucial rivers. Sixteen dams were built at the rivers, destroying habitats for endangered species, critical biological diversity, and

nearby wetlands. The rivers project violated several national laws, such as the National Budget Law, the River Law and the Environmental Impact Assessment Law. Construction contracts for the rivers project are reported to total around \$900 million.

Before its Director General asserted that the Four Rivers project was “reasonable,” the IUCN should have conducted an on-the-ground assessment of the project, which would have shown how it is, in fact, undermining the organization’s hard work of preserving biological diversity. In December 2002, the Technical Guidelines on the Management of *Ex-situ* populations for Conservation were approved at the 14th Meeting of the Programme Committee of Council, in Gland, Switzerland. Nonetheless, the South Korean government’s Four Major Rivers Restoration Project has been committing gross violations of IUCN guidelines, by decimating the habitats of several endangered species, including the Danyang aster (*Aster altaicus* var. *uchiyamae*). Does the IUCN, the international environmental steward, recognize that the rivers project has utterly destroyed a haven for migratory birds’ – the Haepyeong wetland located at Gumi City, Kyeongsangbuk-do province in a flagrant breach of the Ramsar Convention? Is the IUCN aware that organic farmers in Paldang, Dumulmeori, continue to defend their farmlands against forced evictions by the Lee Administration?

5. We respectfully ask for the position of IUCN on these critical matters. Is the IUCN aware that 3,000 university professors and five leading religious groups in South Korea oppose this project? The environmental organizations in South Korea are united in opposition to this project, demanding punishment of those responsible, the removal of the dam, and the restoration of the rivers. We respectfully ask for your official position on this dire situation.

We, the civil environmental organizations of the South Korea, challenge the IUCN Director General’s position on the Four Major Rivers Restoration Project and therefore request the IUCN to clarify its position.

6. In addition, we express deep concern with the IUCN's support of the construction of a naval base in Gangjeong village, Jeju Island. Last April, based on false information provided by the South Korean

government, the IUCN issued an official position stating that "construction of the naval base in Gangjeong is valid according to legitimate processes." It is questionable whether the IUCN put any effort into verifying the credibility of the data provided by the South Korean government.

The IUCN's statement on the Gangjeong naval base contradicts its earlier resolutions regarding the negative impacts of military bases on the environment. At the General Assembly in 2008, the IUCN adopted "the Recommendation for protection of dugongs in Henoko, Okinawa, Japan" and at the General Assembly in Buenos Aires in 1994, passed a resolution addressing the relationship of "military base to conservation area." The IUCN's objective to protect global ecosystems cannot coexist with the goals of increasing militarization at the regional or global scale. We oppose the IUCN's position regarding the naval base project in Gangjeong village, on Jeju Island.

7. The civil environmental organizations of South Korea, which seek peaceful coexistence on the Korean peninsula and with all our Northeast Asia neighbors, urge IUCN to express its clear position. Specifically regarding the naval base project in Gangjeong, we would like you to clarify whether the IUCN is aware of the serious violations of environmental laws, which have led to the destruction of species which are assigned as "endangered" by the Korean government. These endangered species include the red-footed crab (*Sesarma intermedium*) and *Clithon retropietus* V. Martens. We ask you to clarify how the IUCN arrived at its conclusion that the naval base construction "is valid according to legitimate processes."

Just to clarify, the naval base is being built at a UNESCO Biosphere Conservation Area (designated in 2002), and was designated a Cultural Protection Zone by the South Korean government in 2000 and 2004. In 2002 the government's Ministry of Land designated it a Marine Ecosystem Conservation Area; in 2006, the government of Jeju Island designated it a Marine Provincial Park; in 2006, the Ministry of Environment designated it an "Ecological Excellent Village"; in 2007, the Jeju Island government designated it an Absolute Retention Coastal Area; and in 2008, the Ministry of Environment designated it a Natural Park. We ask you to please clarify how the IUCN would consider a project as "legitimate,"

when the government mobilizes both public and private police forces against residents who have committed no crime other than to object to the project's desecration of this precious conservation area.

Gangjeong village in Jeju is an area that must be conserved in accordance with the values of the IUCN. That would mean that the military base construction must be blocked. The IUCN must actively seek to halt the naval base construction at Gangjeong and to restore and preserve the area's natural ecosystems through a resolution at the WCC General Assembly.

8. We, in the spirit of peace on our Korean peninsula, are besieged by the South Korean government's arbitrary administration of law in regard to the environment, and its dictatorial push for national projects for whom only the nation's largest corporations benefit. Since President Lee took office, his administration has expressly weakened laws which had protected South Korea's environment.

South Korea environmentalists are gravely concerned that the government will take advantage of the WCC General Assembly proceeding this September in Jeju to advance its illegitimate national projects. We therefore demand a clear explanation of the IUCN's position regarding the Four Rivers Restoration Project and the Gangjeong Naval Base project. We formally request the IUCN and the 2012 WCC Organizing Committee's clear position and response, which will be a central factor to the position taken by the Korean civil environmental organizations at the WCC General Assembly.

9. In keeping with the IUCN's prodigious achievements toward preserving the biodiversity of the planet, we expect the IUCN and the WCC Organizing Committee to show significant efforts to resolve environmental disputes and related social conflicts in the Republic of Korea, the host nation of the WCC.

As funicular cable cars on the sacred mountains of Jiri-san and Seorak-san threaten Asiatic Black Bears; as sustainable farmers from Gangwon province struggle with the seizure of their land to build a golf course; as tidal power plants at Incheon Bay and Garolim Bay threaten the livelihoods of local fishermen; as residents battle nuclear power plants in Gori, Youngduk and Samcheok; as the farmers and fisherpeople of Jeju Island cope with the destruction of their reef and farmland in order to build a navy base; as country folk struggle to exist after their villages were subsumed by water to construct dams on

Mt. Jiri and Youngju; as laborers strike against brutal working conditions at SSangyoung Motors-- As these manifold violations take place, we shall, with our partners in the international community, take actions to expose the daily brutality levied upon the environment and the people of South Korea, and to correct the wrong doings of the Lee Myung-Bak regime.

We wish for a peaceful resolution to these many environmental and social conflicts, and request that the IUCN and the WCC Organizing Committee clarify their position on these issues as soon as possible.

Support Committee

National Network of Korean Civil Society for Restoration of Four Major Rivers, Provincial Civil Committee against Golf Courses in Gangwon Province, Gangjeong Village Association, Jeju Islanders in the Mainland Caring for Gangjeong, National Network of Korean Civil Society for Opposing to cable car in National Park, Military Bases Peace Network(Gunsan US Military Airbase Retake Civil Movement, Counseling Office of U.S. Base Victims in Gunsan, The National Campaign for Eradication of Crime by U.S. Troops in Korea, Pyeongtaek Peace Center, Peace Nomad, Green Korea United), NANUM MUNHWA, Cultural Action, Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, Life Peace Fellowship, Seoul Human Rights Film Festival, Civil Society Organization Network in Korea, Center 'Dle' for Human Rights Education, Korea Human Rights Foundation, Jeju Council of Social Issue, Jeju Pan-Island Committee for Stop of Military Base and for Realization of Peace Island, National Network of Korean Civil Society for Opposing to the Naval Base in Jeju Island, Jirisan Action Network, Jirisan Networks, Institute for Sustainable Society, People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, Pastoral committee of Environment in Seoul Diocese, Catholic Human Rights Committee, Korea Culture Heritage Policy Research Institute, Korea Institute For Peace Future, Korea Wetland NGO Network, Korea Alliance for Progressive Movement, The National Network of Environmental Organisation of Korea(Green Korea Gongju, Green Korea Kwangju, Nation Park Conservation Network, KCEMS Korean Christian Environmental Movement Solidarity, Korean Network for Green Transport, Green Future, Green Korea United, Green Korea Daegu, Green Korea Daejeon, Green Korea Busan, Citizens Alliance for

Bundang Ecosystem, Buddhist Environmental Solidarity, Forest for Life, Korean Ecoclub, Eco-Horizon Institute, Suwon Eco Center, Energy Peace, Eco Buddha, Korean Women`s Environmental Network, Good Friends of Nature – Korea, Cheonji Boeun Environmental Group of Won Buddhism, Green Korea Wonju, Indramang Life Community, Green Korea Incheon, Back to Farm National Movement Headquarters, Jeju Solidarity for Participatory Self-government and Environmental Preservation, Nature Trail-For the Beauty of This Earth, The National Council of YMCA`s of Korea, National Young Women's Christian Association of Korea, Korea Resource Recycling Federation, Environment and Pollution Research Group, Korean Teacher's Organization For Ecological Education And Action, Pastoral committee of Environment in Seoul Diocese, Korea Federation for Environmental Movement, Citizens' Movement for Environmental Justice)