



**United Nations General Assembly
Second Committee
Agenda Item on Sustainable Development**

**Statement by Narinder Kakar
Permanent Observer of IUCN to the United Nations
New York, 02 November 2010**

Madam Chairperson,

IUCN welcomes the efforts being made to assess the progress in Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, as called for by the General Assembly especially with regard to commitments at the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the fulfillment of the provisions relating to the means of implementation in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Assessing the progress made to date and identifying the gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development would be vital contributions to the work of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development to be held in Brazil in 2012.

IUCN is concerned that biodiversity continues to be lost at unprecedented rates, the majority of the planet's essential ecosystem services are degraded and unsustainably managed, and the levels of CO₂ emissions continue to increase with serious impacts on our climate. Twenty-three years after the publication of the Brundtland Report **Our Common Future**, the need to achieve sustainable development by linking the three pillars viz. environmental, social and economic is more needed than ever before. Because of its multi-dimensional nature, achievement of this goal will require that efforts in this regard be supplemented by serious commitments and cooperation by both and between developed and developing countries and between various segments of the society. Here, the engagement of major groups would be needed, and more particularly the engagement of women in natural resource conservation and management.

As the financial and economic crises dominate the media, there is a temptation to treat the environment and the issue of sustainable development as less important issues. We sincerely hope that this would be avoided.

We must recognize that we have overdrawn our account of natural assets, and the natural environment upon which we depend is compromised as a result. It can recuperate, but the treatment has to be real, on a massive scale, and immediate. We need to increase our investments in nature now, by supporting the environment's ability to continue to provide the trillions of dollars worth of services that it has provided us for millennia – clean air and

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IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges by supporting scientific research; managing field projects all over the world; and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN, international conventions and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice.

IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental network. IUCN is a democratic union with more than 1,000 government and NGO member organizations, and some 10,000 volunteer scientists in more than 150 countries. IUCN's work is supported by 1,100 professional staff in 62 countries and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.

water; food, clothing and medicines, etc. Estimates of the financial value of the services ecosystem provide us are reflected in the recently launched study on The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB), which we trust governments would have reviewed. Investment in nature requires an understanding that the environment is not a separate sector that should be thought of once everything else is ‘fixed’, but rather as a crucial element to address the many challenges we face today, including poverty. Investing in nature through ecosystem-based approaches to managing today’s challenges, is an effective and achievable means to decrease people’s vulnerability (or increase people’s resilience) to drought, desertification, and food insecurity. Without investing in nature, our objective of attaining sustainable development challenges would not succeed.

IUCN is optimistic that governments will move towards making commitments for investing in nature. The outcome of last week’s meeting of the CBD-COP 10, i.e. adoption of a Protocol on Access and Benefit sharing, a Strategic Plan with specific targets, and agreement on a resource mobilization strategy that will allow for the implementation of the newly-adopted Strategic Plan, is a demonstration of governments’ appreciation of nature’s role in sustainable development. The establishment of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services will be another step towards an arrangement which would help in the understanding of the interrelation among the three pillars of sustainable development.

Madam Chair: we are pleased to note that preparations for Rio+20 are proceeding in earnest, with the aim of securing renewed political commitment to sustainable development; assessing the progress and implementation gaps in meeting already agreed commitments; and in addressing new and emerging challenges, with the identification of two themes: (i) green economy within the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and (ii) an institutional framework for sustainable development. We hope that the concerns of some member states about green economy would be allayed by assurances that green economy would not be an alternative to sustainable development, but rather as a stimulus for more efficient and effective integration of social, economic and environmental concerns, and as a pathway to sustainable development rather than as a substitute. We hope that the study asked for by Rio +20 Prepcom from UN/DESA, UNEP and others would help define the concept and allay any misgivings.

Madam Chair: As you may know, IUCN is the world’s oldest and largest international environmental network, with more than 1,000 member organizations in some 160 countries, including governments and NGOs. IUCN also has the benefit of the services and expertise of over 11,000 experts and scientists through its six technical Commissions that review scientific research, and develop standards and legal frameworks for the conservation community. IUCN has also taken the lead in integrating environmental and developmental concerns; in fact, the term sustainable development was first presented in a report prepared jointly by IUCN, WWF and UNEP in 1980, termed **The World Conservation Strategy**. Because of our technical capacity, we have been asked to participate in the work and deliberations of the General Assembly. We are therefore at the service of the United Nations and offer to provide whatever support that may be needed in the preparations for Rio+20. In any case, we are planning to convene IUCN Members in regional forums during the course of 2011 in order to take stock of the progress (or lack thereof) in sustainable development, and to develop a strategy and plan of action by IUCN and its Members, with a view to feeding the results into Rio+20.

Madam Chair, please be assured of IUCN’s ongoing commitment to contribute to the work of the United Nations in addressing, inter alia, issues related to sustainable development.

Thank you.