

## Executive Summary

The evaluation of the 2012 World Conservation Congress (Congress) asked whether the Congress can be made more relevant, effective and efficient. This evaluation has been an internal exercise, undertaken by IUCN's Secretariat Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) Unit between September 2012 and March 2013.

While the 2012 Congress Participants' Survey showed that the Congress was highly appreciated by the participants, a number of suggestions for improvements were made. Some of the key evaluation findings are as follows:

### **1. Participant satisfaction: The 2012 Congress was perceived as a worthwhile investment of time and resources for the participants personally and for their organization**

Assessment of participant satisfaction is primarily based on results from the *2012 Congress Participants' Survey*. The majority of participants were satisfied with most aspects of the Congress. The *Participants' Survey* results also show that the Forum, the Members' Assembly and the overall organization of the Congress met the expectations of an overwhelming majority of the Congress participants. Overall, the *Participants' Survey* showed that the Congress was perceived (by more than 90%) as a worthwhile investment of time and resources for the participants personally and for their organization.

### **2. Congress objectives: At the collective (IUCN Union) level, the purpose of the Congress appears to be limited to the fulfillment of its statutory requirements and opportunities to drive more progress on major biodiversity and sustainability issues might be missed**

A key finding of the 2008 Congress evaluation was that the stated objectives of the Congress were not clearly defined nor broadly disseminated. Despite attempts to identify and communicate Congress objectives, there were no strong improvements in 2012. The reality is that each participant goes to the Congress with a unique set of personal and organizational objectives. At the collective level, the perceived purpose of the Congress appears to be limited to the fulfillment of the statutory requirements of IUCN Congresses.

IUCN senior Secretariat staff believe that Congress, in its current format, may not bring about a sufficient level of tangible progress on significant and/or controversial biodiversity and sustainability issues of global importance. They feel that Congress does have the potential to achieve this as these issues need to be tackled by multi-stakeholder dialogues such as those brokered by IUCN and involving States, government agencies, scientists and civil society.

### **3. The Congress Forum: The Forum represents a unique opportunity for networking with peers and exchanging knowledge on various biodiversity related issues**

According to the 2012 Congress Participants' Survey, 90% of participants felt that overall the Forum met their expectations. The Forum was seen as conducive to networking and knowledge exchange. The number and the diversity of topics discussed were appreciated by participants. However, the high number of events happening simultaneously combined with the thematic day structure made it difficult for participants to attend all the events they wished to attend, and so to optimize the use of their time at Congress. A format including thematic journeys rather than a daily theme, and with less events was proposed by several stakeholders.

Several reported that the Forum represents a unique opportunity for debates on a wide range of biodiversity related issues allowing for creativity away from overly focused events or highly politicized decision making bodies. In fact some stakeholders emphasized that this is exactly the right niche for the IUCN Congress Forum noting that there is no other event like the Forum in the world. However, most stakeholders interviewed agreed that greater focus on a small number of important issues

could potentially result in more tangible results for the Union as a whole, while emphasizing that such an approach should not significantly alter the Forum's current nature.

#### **4. The Members' Assembly: Statutory requirements were met but the Members' Assembly processes need reform if they are to efficiently deliver real change**

The majority of respondents to the 2012 *Congress Participants' Survey* (81%) felt that the Members' Assembly met their expectations. It is also clear that statutory requirements were met as the Assembly went through all its planned business by the end of the Congress. Nevertheless several concerns were raised regarding the decision-making processes and the delivery of real changes in terms of biodiversity and sustainability governance and practice:

**The motions process.** The evaluation revealed that the main weaknesses of the process were the same as those highlighted four years ago, namely:

- the complexity of the process managed by a small team;
- the high number of motions that need to be reviewed and discussed prior to and during the Members' Assembly (in 2012 there was a 33% increase in the number of motions to be voted on compared to 2008); and,
- the uncertain progress made regarding the implementation and impact of resolutions and recommendations adopted at previous Congresses.

The 2012 evaluation suggests that motions debated during the Members' Assembly need to be significantly reduced if any meaningful discussions are to occur. Motions tabled also need to be more global in scope and local, national and regional issues should be discussed elsewhere. IUCN is seen to miss the opportunity to join up its constituents to have in-depth discussion and make decisions on key global biodiversity and sustainability issues. Members clearly demonstrated their appetite for reforming the motions process by giving a mandate to an Advisory Group on the Motions Process and Resolutions Implementation to develop recommendations for a reform of the process (WCC-2012 Res. 001.)

**Participation in the Members' Assembly.** While a comparable number of Members were accredited to vote in 2008 (67% of the membership) and 2012 (62% of the membership), significantly more Members actually voted in 2012. On average 65% of accredited Members voted on each decision in 2012 while only 40 % of the accredited membership did so in 2008. Despite this significant improvement in the participation rate in the voting process during the Members' Assembly in 2012 compared to 2008, decisions taken in 2012 were still based on average on only 41% of the total IUCN membership potential votes (compared to 28% in 2008). The quorum requirement that was proposed by the Council (and rejected by the Members) would have been met for 100% of the motions passed in Jeju. Most stakeholders interviewed appreciated that there was an improvement in terms of participation rate in 2012 but felt that there is still scope for better engagement from the membership. How this could translate into practice needs clarification and to take into account the following:

- Would a higher level of participation actually give more legitimacy to the decisions taken?
- How can participation be increased in practice?
- Would higher level of participation increase the implementation rate for Resolutions?

**The election process.** The majority of respondents to the 2012 *Congress Participants' Survey* felt that the election process was transparent. The new electronic voting system was welcomed and deemed a very positive change. The main issue raised by respondents was that election results were not communicated immediately after the votes, but in some cases up to days later. However it was explained by the election officer during the Congress that it was standard electoral practice that no vote should take place in the knowledge of the outcome of a previous vote and that partial reporting of the election results could have the potential of affecting the remaining elections. Also, a number of survey respondents and stakeholders interviewed felt uneasy about candidates getting

elected by a very small margin. Last but not least, a few respondents to the *2012 Congress Participants' Survey* and some stakeholders interviewed stressed that IUCN Members and Council should pay more attention to the skills, knowledge and experience a candidate needs to successfully understand and lead IUCN, noting that more candidates should have experience in the governance of large international environmental organizations.

**The adoption of the IUCN programme and of the Commission mandates for the next four years.** There was very little discussion of IUCN's 2013-16 Programme during the Members' Assembly, despite efforts to integrate it into the agenda. Although it was highlighted that the Programme was also discussed prior to the Congress during a formal consultation phase, there is a need to clarify to what extent the IUCN Programme should actually be discussed during the Assembly, which specific aspects, and in what format. On the adoption of Commission mandates for the next four years, a process is missing in or before Congress to determine what Commissions are needed to implement the proposed Programme and what their respective mandates should be.

#### **5. Linkages between the Forum and the Members' Assembly: The majority of the participants feel there are clear and strong linkages between the Forum and the Members' Assembly**

Overall, survey results show that nearly three-quarters (73%) of the respondents felt that there were clear and strong linkages between the Forum and the Members' Assembly. Although there was an imperfect match between several Forum events and Programme thematic areas and a relatively low percentage of Forum events explicitly linked to the content of the motions discussed during the Members' Assembly, the great majority of respondents to the *2012 Congress Participants' Survey* felt that the discussions that took place during the Forum events were on the whole relevant to the 2013-2016 programme and to the motions discussed during the Members' Assembly.

For the first time, sittings of the Members' Assembly were held on each day of the Congress starting from the second day of the Forum. Sessions of the Members' Assembly did not overlap with the Forum events (with the exception of Conservation Campus events) but were rather held in the morning before the Forum sessions started. The intention was to help better connect the Congress themes and main messages of the Forum to the proposed IUCN Programme for 2013-2016 and to the motions proposed by Members. Members reported some advantages and some disadvantages related to this approach. It is difficult to judge whether the advantages of this agenda integration outweighed the disadvantages. However if the Members' Assembly was streamlined as suggested in this report in particular leading to a smaller number of Motions, some of the perceived disadvantages related to Forum and Member's Assembly agenda integration could decrease in importance.

#### **6. Congress Management: Congress 2012 was well managed by a dedicated team but an inexplicit MOU with the host country created challenges for the Congress Management Team that had little control over a number of key aspects of the Congress.**

For the Secretariat Congress Management Team, one of the most important lessons learned in 2012 concerned the negotiation of and the level of detail to be included in the Memorandum of Understanding with the Host Country. The deep involvement of the Korean Organizing Committee in Congress preparation and management meant that it invested significant time and resources in the Congress. In particular, it made available a significant number of volunteers, ensured support across a variety of institutions and helped to give the event a true Korean flavor. However, it also meant that the Congress Management Team, largely due to the structure of the MOU, had less control over various important aspects of the Congress with important implications for access to the local market for fundraising purposes, logistics and the Congress communication strategy.

## **Recommendations**

### **Main recommendations**

- MR1. Put in place a process to better define and communicate the purpose and objectives of the Congress to get a clearer sense of what is to be achieved collectively as a Union beyond the achievement of individual Member objectives and the statutory requirements.
- MR2. Identify what tangible progress on the most pressing biodiversity issues of global importance could/should be expected from the Congress. These should primarily be issues that need to be tackled jointly by States, scientists and NGOs together.
- MR3. Propose a Forum programme with thematic journeys as opposed to daily themes.
- MR4. Ensure that a number of Forum events are dedicated to in depth solution oriented discussions on critical issues relevant to the Union as a whole and closely linked to the implementation the IUCN Programme while still enabling participants to engage in events on a much wider range of topics.
- MR5. Clarify what should be the specific functions of the Members' Assembly and reform related processes accordingly (starting with its policy making function and the related motions process).
- MR6. Consider that changes made to the motions and Resolutions processes before the next Congress could include:
- The strengthening of the motion's preparation phase
  - The identification of acceptable mechanisms to deal with uncontroversial motions in order for them not to consume significant amounts of time during the Members Assembly
  - The identification of more stringent eligibility criteria for motions (in particular for motions submitted during the Congress)
  - The strengthening the monitoring of the implementation and impacts of the Resolutions
- MR7. Clarify what would be the desired level of Members' participation in the decisions taken during the Members' Assembly and means to ensure it.
- MR8. Ensure that for future Congresses, a more explicit MOU with the host country is signed and in particular that it includes the host country proposal and specifies that the Professional Congress Organizer (PCO) is recruited by and acting directly under the authority of the IUCN Congress team.

### **Other recommendations**

- OR1. Identify more formally how to use the Congress to better support the implementation of the IUCN global thematic and regional programmes priorities.
- OR2. Reduce the number of events offered during the Forum while ensuring that a wide diversity of topics is covered and that each event is not overcrowded.
- OR3. Revisit the approach to Forum Posters to make them more interesting and worth the effort
- OR4. Define a more transparent process to identify which Commissions would be needed to implement the proposed Programme and what their respective mandates should be and either agree on those prior to Congress in order to allow elections of respective Chairs at Congress or postpone election of Chairs until after Congress.
- OR5. Clarify expectations regarding the desired level of debate on the Programme during the Members' Assembly and the format it should take.
- OR6. Ensure that adequate support is provided to the plenary Chair both at the technical and political level.
- OR7. Continue efforts to improve the linkages in terms of content between the Congress Forum and the Members' Assembly through a better integration of the preparation process and timelines for both parts of the Congress.
- OR8. Re-evaluate the possibility of continuing with the integration of Forum and the Members' Assembly agenda based on the progress made regarding the streamlining of the business of the Members' Assembly.