

# **Protected Areas and Human Survival: Enhancing the Role of Conservation in Sustaining Society**

***A preview of the Fourth  
World Congress on  
National Parks and  
Protected Areas  
February 10-21, 1992  
Caracas, Venezuela***

**by the  
International Union for  
Conservation of Nature and  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Our species entered the industrial age with a population of one billion and with biological diversity possibly at an all-time high. Species and habitats were freely available for people to exploit.

Our species has flourished. The human population is now over 5 billion, and still growing. This is a time of extraordinary change in the relationship between people and biological resources, because our numbers are expanding exponentially at the expense of wild species and habitats. Human activities are progressively eroding the Earth's capacity to support life at the same time that growing numbers of people are making ever greater demands on the planet's resources. As the World Commission on Environment and Development pointed out in their report in April 1987 [*Our Common Future*, Oxford University Press], the combined destructive impacts of a poor majority are rapidly eroding the buffer that has always existed, at least on a global scale, between human resource consumption and the planet's productive capacity.

Maintaining maximum biological and cultural diversity assumes far greater urgency as rates of environmental change increase. Diversity in genes, species, ecosystems, and resource management systems provides the raw materials for adapting to changing conditions. But the erosion of the planet's life-support systems is likely to continue until human aspirations come more into line with the Earth's resource capacities, thereby becoming sustainable over the long term. The problems of conservation therefore cannot be separated from the larger issues of social and economic development.

Growing public concern about the environment is convincing politicians that the issue is no longer whether conservation is a good idea, but rather how it can be implemented under the social, economic, and political constraints within which conservation organizations must operate.

We are at a crossroads in the history of human civilization. Our actions in the next few years will determine whether we take a road towards a chaotic future characterized by over-exploitation and abuse of our biological resources, or take the opposite road toward maintaining biological diversity and using biological resources sustainably. The future well-being of human society hangs in the balance.

As a contribution to a more productive future for the planet, the Fourth World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas will help ensure that representative examples of the world's natural habitats are effectively managed for the sustainable benefit of both people and nature. This specific contribution from the Congress must be integrated with wider programs designed to achieve global harmony between humanity and the natural world, to be considered *inter alia* by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in June 1992 in Brazil.

### CONGRESS OBJECTIVES

The goal of the Congress is to promote the effective management of the world's natural habitats so that they can make their optimal contribution to sustaining human society. The specific objectives of the Congress will be to:

- *Assess the current status* of the protected area estate, and review progress since the Third Congress in Bali in 1982;
- *Demonstrate the value* of protected areas within wider strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of the Earth's natural resources;
- *Expand the rationale* for the various categories of protected areas and demonstrate the contribution

each can make to conserving biodiversity and sustaining society;

- Promote the concept and tools of *regional planning*, with conservation of biological diversity as a key dimension, thereby demonstrating that protected areas can be a focal point of much more broadly based *rural development initiatives* which can bring genuine benefits on a long-term basis to rural communities;
- Greatly *expand the constituency* for protected areas by identifying productive partnerships with a broad range of other sectors;
- Consolidate the *global system of protected areas*, identify gaps in coverage, note the vulnerability of the system to climate changes and social pressures, and develop a system for assigning priorities for action;
- Further develop a *system for monitoring* the status of protected areas, both nationally and internationally;
- Strengthen the *application of science* to protected area management issues, including the design of protected area systems, management of threatened species, reintroductions, the relationship between *in situ* and *ex situ* efforts, control of exotic species, and restoration of degraded ecosystems;
- Develop improved concepts of *protected areas in coastal and marine habitats*, taking full account of the distinctive ecological features of the marine environment and leading on to encouraging creation of additional such areas;
- Greatly increase *international support* for protected areas as an integral part of national development efforts, and enhance the

financial means available to manage protected areas;

- Develop and transmit a message to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development regarding the value of protected areas in the wider strategy for global sustainable development; and
- Agree on a *Global Plan of Action* for achieving significant progress in protected area management over the next decade.

## PREVIOUS CONGRESSES

The first two National Parks Conferences (in 1962 and 1972) helped to lay the foundations for the selection, establishment, and management of protected areas, improving information about such areas, enhancing the professionalism of those involved in their planning and management, and strengthening the international network of experts involved in protected areas.

Since the publication in 1980 of the World Conservation Strategy by IUCN, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the World Wildlife Fund, the role of protected areas in sustaining society has been made much more explicit, through recognition of the vital functions which they play in conserving biological diversity and maintaining ecological processes. This expanded awareness of the values of protected areas led IUCN and its partners to elevate the meeting to a Congress, a meeting of professionals which is convened on a regular basis to agree on a course of action. It was also agreed that a third meeting—the first to be called a Congress—needed to include other kinds of protected areas, a principle that was carried forward in the work of that Congress, held in Bali, Indonesia, in October

1982. The Bali session was the first such congress held in the developing world and began to examine the relationships between protected areas and sustainable development. In the words of the World Commission on Environment and Development, "The Bali Congress demonstrated the many contributions that protected areas, managed in the modern way, are making to sustaining human society." The Congress concluded with the adoption of:

- Twenty resolutions which focused international attention and action on the needs of protected areas;
- The Bali Declaration, a short statement of participants' views on the vital importance of protected areas; and
- The Bali Action Plan, a detailed set of objectives and activities for IUCN and others to undertake in the ensuing ten-year period. A "mid-term review" of the Action Plan produced by IUCN in late 1987 demonstrated the numerous solid achievements that came out of the Bali Congress.

The Bali Congress also generated three major publications: *National Parks, Conservation, and Development* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1984), which contains a series of papers on how the world's protected areas are contributing to sustaining society; *Managing Coastal and Marine Protected Areas* (IUCN, 1985), which provides the basic manual for planning and managing protected areas in these habitats; and *Managing Protected Areas in the Tropics* (IUCN/UNEP, 1986), which provides the basic protected area management manual for much of the terrestrial world. Numerous shorter publications and journal articles were also generated.

In recognizing that the state of conservation is constantly changing, and that changes were likely to accelerate in the subsequent years, the Bali Congress called for a Fourth Congress in 1992, and agreed that it should take place in Latin America.

### THE AUDIENCE

While the three previous congresses primarily involved the professionals directly concerned with protected areas, the Fourth Congress will also aim to reach out to and influence the numerous other sectors which affect protected areas. These include those who depend on the genes, species, and ecosystem services provided by protected habitats (indigenous people, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, pharmaceutical and other interests) as well as those who require wildlands for other purposes (water, timber, wilderness, tourism, etc.). Since financial support for protected areas is a major concern of the Congress, numerous donor agencies will be invited to participate. A major effort will be made to involve the private sector as well, including non-governmental conservation organizations, relevant industries, indigenous peoples' groups, and local resource managers. Economists and land-use planners will be invited, so as to enhance the flow of ideas between professionals concerned with protected area management and those concerned with wider conservation concerns. Attendance of 800-1,000 participants from outside Venezuela is projected; participation will be by invitation only.

### VENUE, DATE & SPONSORSHIP

The Congress will take place in Caracas, Venezuela, from 10 to 21 February 1992.

As with previous congresses, IUCN will be the organizer, in close collaboration with the Host Government (as represented by Venezuela's Ministry of the Environment). Co-sponsors will include UNEP, Unesco [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization], FAO [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations], the U.S. National Park Service, and the Federation of Nature and National Parks of Europe; numerous others will be invited to be co-sponsors, especially from among the members of IUCN.

### PROGRAM CONTENT AND APPROACH

The Fourth World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas will be a technical meeting which concentrates on how protected areas can better contribute to sustaining societies. It will seek to bring those concerned with professional management of protected areas together with a larger audience of potential supporters. It will therefore include both plenary sessions designed to involve this larger community, and technical workshops which are designed to promote a better future for protected areas and to support protected area managers in their efforts to manage their areas more effectively.

In the time between now and February 1992, numerous activities carried out by many organizations in all parts of the world will be addressing the major challenges to conservation across a broad front. The Congress will build on such action, and bring it to a stage of maturity such that Congress participants will be able to develop a body of principles, practice, and examples for solving a broad range of conservation

problems in the decade of the 1990s and beyond.

It is intended that the Congress be participatory. In principle, every participant should be expected to make both written and verbal contributions to the outputs of the Congress. This calls for a Congress with relatively few plenary sessions and many workshop and other participatory sessions. In summary, the Congress is envisaged to include:

### *Plenary Sessions*

- "Major Protected Area Issues of the 1990s." These papers will provide an overview of the development and conservation context within which protected areas must fit, and identify both obstacles and opportunities for protected areas. They will provide the foundation for many of the workshop sessions that follow.
- "The Contributions of Protected Areas to Sustaining Society: A Global Review." This session will include an overview on the subject, followed by nine geographically based reviews which assess current status, relations with development, and future directions. Each review will highlight areas of particular concern to that region. It will establish a factual basis for the Congress.
- "Expanding Partnerships in Conservation." Many sectors outside of traditional conservation have intimate ties with natural areas. This session will bring leading figures from these sectors to suggest how new or strengthened alliances could be formed. This will be a major outreach session.
- "Protected Areas in Latin America and the Caribbean." A spe-

cial session designed by the Host Country and its neighbors, to give participants a summary of current status and trends, innovative approaches to conservation problems, obstacles to conservation, and other issues of concern.

- A Concluding Plenary Session to receive summary reports from workshops, adopt recommendations and the Action Plan for Protected Areas, adopt a Declaration for transmittal to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and see a closing summary address by the Congress' Secretary General.

### *Workshops*

The workshops will each involve producing a product, often based on significant participatory work. Because the workshops are expected to be participatory, they must be relatively restricted in size; numerous parallel sessions will be held so that all participants will find subjects of interest. Addressing terrestrial, wetland, and marine protected areas, the workshops will be based around four themes:

- "Building Partnerships for Conservation." Workshops under this theme will go into the practical details of how productive new linkages can be forged between protected areas and other sectors of society, building on the premise that substantial protected areas are an essential part of the development process if it is to be sustainable. Workshops will also identify mechanisms for increased international support, including means of increasing funding, investment opportunities for banks and donors, and international conventions.

- "Social, Economic, and Political Issues." These workshops will seek to incorporate the concepts of sustainable development (a series of social, economic, and political ideas which are aimed at building consensus for forms of development which do not destroy the environment), thereby enabling the constituency in support of protected areas to be strengthened and made more responsive to society's needs.
- "Protected Areas in a Changing World." Climate change is often the most obvious dynamic, but protected areas also need to deal with a range of other changes, both positive and negative. These workshops will identify the issues and suggest solutions.
- "Strengthening Protected Areas Management." These workshops will deal with three main issues: expanding the global network, managing protected areas, and managing biological diversity. Topics covered will include systems plans, conservation of the coastal zone, legislation and policy formulation, institutional options, use of modern technology by area managers, data management, training, and species management issues.

### *Films, Posters, and Displays*

In addition to the formal sessions of the Congress, a series of parallel efforts and events will be held, as part of a comprehensive communications strategy aimed at building a larger constituency for protected areas. They will include:

- Trade show exhibits and demonstrations by manufacturers of recreational equipment, radio equipment, computers and software, solar cells, eco-

tourism, structural designs, architectural and landscape design firms, etc.

- A Nature Tourism Marketplace, which would bring together the demand (tour agents) and supply (those offering opportunities for nature tourism) sides of the nature tourism equation. (The involvement of the World Tourism Organization is being sought.)
- An exhibit of "National Parks and Protected Areas of the World" by IUCN.
- A series of exhibits on "Public Information in Protected Areas," consisting of examples of material from around the world.
- On-line database demonstrations of Geographical Information Systems and other computer applications to protected area issues.
- A festival of films on protected areas and biological diversity.
- A workshop for media people.
- Posters and exhibits from participating institutions and individuals.
- A televised debate, which might form an element within a major international TV series on protected areas.
- Book exhibits, both technical and popular, dealing with the theme of the Congress.
- Videos on a wide range of conservation topics.

### *Associated Tours*

As part of the Congress, the Organizing Committee will be organizing a number of professional tours of varying durations (from day trips to 10 days) before, during, and after the Congress. These will be designed specifically to demonstrate to professionals in protected area manage-

ment the kinds of problems and solutions that are being experienced in Latin America and the Caribbean. Tours will be designed to highlight Venezuela and surrounding countries, including Brazil, Suriname, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Costa Rica, and Peru.

A Caribbean Parks Cruise, designed to focus attention on the national parks and protected areas of the insular Caribbean, is also being planned as part of the Congress program, to be organized by the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute.

### OUTPUTS

As at the Bali Congress, the outputs will be multiple. In summary, the following can be expected:

- A *succinct message from the Congress* to be transmitted to the June 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in the form of a recommendation to be considered for adoption by the Conference (in essence conveying the message to the outside world that protected areas have a vital role to play in sustaining human society, thereby enlarging the constituency in support of protected areas).
- *Recommendations* (very limited in number) addressed principally to conservation organizations, intergovernmental bodies, and governments; many of these will be developed by workshops.
- A *Global Plan of Action*, to set the course for protected areas into the next century, seeking to identify the proportion of the terrestrial surface which should be managed to conserve biological diversity. This would identify precisely where new protected areas

should be located, agree on priorities for action, and create a world-wide network of demonstration protected areas to illustrate the application of principles in widely varying circumstances and different realms.

- An *investment portfolio*, including a set of proposals to enable the major development agencies to invest in improving the contributions of protected areas in sustaining society.
- *Messages to policy makers*, succinct and to the point, on, for example, the economic benefits of protected areas, climatic change and protected areas, biodiversity and protected areas, protected areas and civil conflict, conservation benefits of restored landscapes, establishing areas to conserve genes, and "sector" principles and guidelines arrived at as a result of the outreach sessions. These messages would carry forward the priority requirements identified in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development.
- Books for both general and specialist audiences. These will include: *Major Conservation Issues of the 1990s*, with contributions from leaders in a wide range of sectors from all parts of the world; *How Protected Areas Sustain Society*, incorporating the experience from the past 10 years from all parts of the globe; *Building Partnerships for Conservation*, identifying the contributions from "non-traditional" sectors; *Regional Planning Approaches to Habitat Protection*, placing protected areas in a larger context and illustrating approaches that have worked in various parts of the world; *People in Protected Areas*, specifying the

variety of approaches that have worked in various circumstances; *Consolidating the World's Network of Protected Areas*, specifying the locations of the additional areas to be added to the protected estate in a variety of management categories; *Systems of Protected Areas: Principles, Procedures, and Case Studies*, providing planners with an approach to actually establishing the areas proposed; *International Peace Parks: Principles, Procedures, and Case Studies*.

• *Shorter publications for conservation planners*, such as "Private Protected Areas," "Tourism in Protected Areas: Guidelines for Management," "Research to Enhance Management of Protected Areas," "How to Generate Greater Support for Conservation from Politicians," "How to Determine the Economic Contributions of Conservation," "Conservation in a Changing World," "Extending the Benefits of Protected Areas to

Surrounding Lands," "Categories of Protected Areas," "Institutional Options for Protected Areas," "Data Management for Conservation," and "How to Pay for Conservation."

• *Manuals for use in the field or in training by park managers*, such as: management manuals on *Managing Protected Areas in the 1990s* and a totally new *Managing Coastal and Marine Protected Areas*, each of which will draw on the entire corpus of material available at the Congress; and shorter works on "Measuring Effective Management of Protected Areas," "How to Manage Genebank Areas," "Reintroducing Extirpated Species: Principles and Practice," "Dealing with Introduced Species," "The Conduct of Research in Protected Areas," and "Managing Endangered Species." All of these will be of a practical, "hands-on" nature.

