

WCPA News: Raising the Profile of Protected Areas in the Convention on Biological Diversity

This paper was reviewed at the symposium "Protected Areas in the 21st Century—From Islands to Networks" (Albany, Western Australia, November 24-29, 1997). Attended by more than 80 protected areas experts from over 40 countries, the symposium helped shape the proposal below, and endorsed the principle of promoting a work programme on protected areas within the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Introduction

Protected areas are essential to biodiversity conservation, and must be at the heart of efforts to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). But, while they are specifically mentioned in Article 8 of the Convention, protected areas have not yet received focused attention from the Conference of the Parties (COP), the implementing body of the CBD. The purpose of this paper is to propose that an initiative be undertaken to raise the profile of protected areas in the implementation of the Convention.

Protected areas are "well known as national parks and nature reserves," but "they also encompass more recent concepts such as sustainable use reserves, wilderness areas and heritage sites. With proper management to effectively conserve biological diversity, a good network of protected areas forms the pinnacle of a nation's efforts to protect biodiversity, ensuring that the most valuable sites and representative populations of important species are conserved in a variety of ways. The network complements other measures taken to conserve biodiversity outside protected areas" (Glowka et al. 1994, 39).

Protected areas also provide societies around the world with a wide range of environmental services, acting, for example, as sources of fresh water for large cities, as protection against tidal surges and flooding, as

the foundation of a prosperous tourism industry, and as the basis for productive marine and freshwater fisheries. Protected areas are thus worth many billions of dollars, but they are also important for the non-material values which human communities attach to them in every region of the world.

The global network of over 30,300 protected areas of various types now covers approximately 8.84% of the total land area of the world. The fact that nearly every country has set up protected areas is evidence of governments' commitment to ensuring that this generation passes on to future generations a world at least as diverse and productive as the one we now enjoy. This commitment has been bolstered by similar actions taken by many sectors of civil society.

But despite the numerous initiatives taken at international, national and local levels in support of protected areas, more are required in many countries and existing ones need to be larger. Also, established protected areas everywhere are under threat, and these threats mount year by year. The main dangers are the ever-increasing demands for land and water resources to meet human needs, especially in poorer countries. Pollution, climate change, and irresponsible tourism add to the pressures. Too often protected areas lack political support and are poorly funded.

So there is an increasing credibility gap. On the one hand, the values of protected areas are clear, and indeed more and more such areas are being set up: on the other hand, progress is often thwarted by the ever-greater pressures placed on these areas. The rhetoric which often accompanies the establishment of protected areas has to be contrasted with the reality of there being many "paper parks"—protected areas legally in existence, but not functioning in practice.

This dilemma cannot be resolved by a strategy based solely on law enforcement, nor can it be dealt with only within the areas themselves. Instead, protected areas must be planned and managed with, and through, local communities wherever possible, not against them; developed as part of sustainable strategies for poverty alleviation and economic and social advancement in rural areas; and encompassed within broader

bioregional strategies incorporating lands around or between more strictly protected core areas. There is a need to utilise a wide range of protected areas approaches, including areas in which people live and make a living, and involve all levels of government and all sectors of civil society. While the scale of the crisis facing the world's protected areas is well documented, there is now also wide understanding of the required response.

The CBD provides an opportunity to help mobilise a more effective, integrated response than has been possible hitherto. Article 8 of the Convention (on *In situ* Conservation) calls on each Contracting Party to: establish a system of protected areas or areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biological diversity (8a); develop guidelines for the selection, establishment and management of protected areas or areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biological diversity (8b); regulate or manage biological resources important for the conservation of biological diversity, whether within or outside protected areas, with a view to ensuring their conservation and sustainable use (8c); and promote environmentally sound and sustainable development in areas adjacent to protected areas with a view to furthering protection of these areas (8e). There are also many other parts of the CBD which are relevant to protected areas (e.g., training, research, education), although the distinctive role which such areas

can play in each of these is not usually identified.

In its decisions, the COP has specifically addressed the importance of establishing and consolidating representative systems of marine and coastal protected areas; emphasised the importance of protected areas in contributing to the conservation of *in situ* forest biodiversity; and recommended the development of a thematic approach to the compilation and dissemination of information on protected areas.

Despite these welcome initial developments, so far the CBD has not yet been able to promote action which would have a significant impact by reversing the destructive trends affecting the world's protected areas. IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) believes, however, that the crisis facing the world's protected areas represents one of the biggest challenges to the COP of the CBD. Without effective systems of protected areas, there can be no long-term *in situ* conservation of biological diversity; and *ex situ* measures alone can never be more than a very partial substitute. The text of the CBD is very general in setting out obligations for Contracting Parties towards protected areas. WCPA believes that the COP should develop a general work programme so as to raise the profile of protected areas in implementing the CBD—with the overriding purpose of enhancing the future prospects for biodiversity conservation through protected areas worldwide.

By consolidating and disseminating experience in the effective planning and management of protected areas, such a work programme developed within the framework of the CBD would increase greatly the impact of Article 8. It would also bring together the implications for protected areas of those articles of the CBD which do not explicitly address *in situ* conservation.

The work programme could lead to a number of important measures taken by the COP. At one end of the range of options is the adoption of a protocol on protected areas; another possibility is the development of an annex to the CBD on protected areas; but much can also be achieved through decisions of the COP. At this stage, WCPA has no preference; what matters is that a process to raise the profile of protected areas be embarked upon soon, and with determination.

The Planning and Management of Protected Areas

Much work has been done by the worldwide community of protected areas professionals in recent years to improve the quality of planning and management. Examples are: the Fourth World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas, Caracas, Venezuela (1992); numerous IUCN/WCPA regional and thematic meetings; publications (especially guidelines), workshops, training events, etc., to improve management standards; and resolutions of the IUCN General Assembly and of its 1996

World Conservation Congress (WCC; the resolutions referred to below are in IUCN 1997), along with other international measures (e.g., the World Heritage and Ramsar conventions). Through these and a wealth of other initiatives at the national and local levels, a corpus of best practice has developed in the planning and management of protected areas which can be drawn upon in the suggested work programme.

The Possible Scope of a CBD Work Programme on Protected Areas

The following elements could form the basis of the proposed work-programme for the COP, leading to measures to encourage Contracting Parties to:

Develop a national system plan for protected areas. The implications of this are set out in guidelines prepared by IUCN/WCPA. *A Guide to the Convention on Biological Diversity* (Glowka et al. 1994) says that the word "system" "implies that the protected areas of a Party or region should be chosen in a logical way, and together would form a network, in which the various components conserve different portions of biological diversity" (p. 39). Clearly this needs planning. The CBD requires countries to put in place a national system of protected areas; however, the concept of a plan to guide this is only hinted at in Article 8b: the need for a national system plan should be made clear. Such a plan could form part of the National Biodiver-

sity Strategy called for under Article 6b; if not, it should be closely linked to the strategy.

Establish new protected areas in priority areas for biodiversity conservation. This is implicit already in Article 8a, but a more explicit requirement to consider the need to set up new areas would help governments to give higher priority to neglected ecosystems, e.g., in the marine and desert environments.

Set up protected areas with a range of management objectives. WCC Recommendation 1.35 urges countries to "apply the IUCN system of protected areas categories which both provide strict protection primarily in order to protect nature and which provide for a balance of conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources to help meet the needs of local people." The six categories are:

- I. Strict Nature Reserve/ Wilderness Area: protected area managed mainly for science or wilderness protection.
- II. National Park: protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation.
- III. Natural Monument: protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific features.
- IV. Habitat/Species Management Area: protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention.
- V. Protected Landscape/Seascape: protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation.
- VI. Managed Resource Protected

Area: protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural resources (IUCN 1994).

Put in place the legal or other means to plan and manage protected areas, including measures to enforce laws, etc. IUCN advice on this says: "Implementing Articles 8a and 8b requires a firm legal base under which government authorities can establish and manage protected areas" (Glowka et al. 1994, 40). However, in some countries laws are supplemented or complemented by custom or tradition. None of this effort is of much value, however, without the power of enforcement.

Adopt and implement management plans (or similar measures) at the site level for individual protected areas, or groups of related protected areas. The need for a framework for site management as provided for by a management plan is widely recognised as a necessary means of ensuring that the areas in question can be managed effectively. Plans must however be implemented if they are to be of real value.

Adopt bioregional approaches to planning and management. Strictly protected core areas on land and sea need to be buffered by support zones (see Article 8e). Where appropriate, they should also be linked by corridors of ecologically friendly land uses, and include also the restoration of degraded ecosystems (see Article 8f). The bioregional approach, with its emphasis on interlinked networks of protected areas rather than "islands," is rapidly emerging as a cen-

tral thrust of much work on the design of protected areas systems for the future—for example, to help cope with the consequences of climate change. See also WCC Resolution 1.35.

Integrate protected areas planning and management with all sectors of government policy. Protected areas need to be integrated with policies for resource conservation. For example, with agriculture, forestry, freshwater and marine fisheries, other aspects of economic development (e.g., transport, tourism, industry, energy, minerals, and urban and infra-structure development) and other government use of land (e.g., for defence).

Monitor the effectiveness with which protected areas are managed. Monitoring and evaluation systems are needed to improve decision-making in the field (i.e., adaptive management), as well as to review protected area policies, enhance accountability, and justify resource allocations. Such action will help to ensure limited resources are used wisely and to ensure that "paper parks" become real protected areas.

Ensure the special place of protected areas in environmental assessment procedures. Article 14 requires Contracting Parties to introduce appropriate procedures for environmental impact assessment. It is desirable that the special place of protected areas is recognised in national legislation, etc.

Adopt or remove economic incentives affecting protected areas. There is a need for economic incentives to support protected areas, and to re-

move so-called perverse incentives which threaten protected areas. Action here is one of the most important practical measures open to governments in furthering the aims of the CBD. It would also help Parties to ensure that the requirements of Article 11 (Incentive Measures) are applied to protected areas as elsewhere.

Provide a national framework level to encourage an appropriate range of organisations to set up and manage protected areas. WCC Recommendation 1.35 speaks of "affirming the essential role of national governments in protected areas planning and management" but also providing "a fuller role to be played by provincial and local governments, indigenous peoples, other local communities, NGOs and private organisations and individuals." However, as signatories to the CBD, governments will wish to provide a framework for such efforts, which could be provided by the national system plan—see above.

Adopt public participation, collaborative management, and stakeholder involvement in the planning and management of protected areas. This has been recommended in numerous IUCN resolutions (e.g., WCC 1.42), IUCN publications, CBD resolutions, and other advice.

Recognise the rights of indigenous peoples, as well as of local communities, to their lands or territories, and to the responsible use of those resources within protected areas which they have traditionally used in a sustainable way. Traditional cultural

integrity and the traditional rights of indigenous peoples and other local communities "can often be supported by protected areas policies and practices which safeguard traditional forms of sustainable resource use" (WCC Recommendation 1.35).

Include protected areas in policies of public education and awareness. Article 13a contains general requirements about public education to encourage the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The need here is for more explicit encouragement to Parties to include protected areas within public education and awareness programmes.

Put in place programmes of scientific study and research to underpin biodiversity conservation efforts in protected areas. Article 12b contains general requirements about research to underpin the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The need here is for more explicit encouragement to Parties to include protected areas within such programmes of scientific study, especially for benchmark monitoring of change.

Link in situ and ex situ conservation. The CBD sees *in situ* conservation as the principal means of conserving biodiversity. However, Article 9 places obligations on Parties to adopt measures for *ex situ* conservation. It is important that there are appropriate links between these two complementary approaches to conservation.

Adopt policies on bio-prospecting and access to genetic resources in pro-

tected areas. Article 15 deals with access to genetic resources. Many of these will be found in protected areas, and it is highly desirable therefore that Parties adopt policies and procedures relating to bio-prospecting and access to resources for such areas which do not adversely affect their conservation status.

Set up transfrontier protected areas through co-operative arrangements with neighbouring countries. In order to conserve shared biodiversity resources *in situ*, many countries will need to establish more transfrontier protected areas, and to draw up agreements on their collaborative management.

Build capacity within individual countries through training for protected areas. The importance of strengthening the training of professional staff at all levels engaged in protected areas management is widely recognised. The need here is to make the linkage with the obligations on Parties under Article 12 on Research and Training.

Request countries to collect, exchange and disseminate information about protected areas. The exchange of information about biodiversity is the subject of Article 17. In respect of protected areas, there would be great value in encouraging Contracting Parties voluntarily to provide regular updated reports to IUCN's Environmental Law Centre (ELC) and the World Conservation Monitoring

Centre (WCMC). The ELC maintains a global database on environmental law, and WCMC maintains the global database on the status of the world's protected areas. Their ability to assist countries to meet their CBD obligations is greatly helped by the receipt of timely reports on status and distribution of protected areas.

Include protected areas within reports of the Contracting Parties. Article 26 calls for national reports from Contracting Parties to be presented to the COP on measures to implement the CBD. These should include appropriate reports on progress with protected areas, e.g. in respect of the foregoing list of items.

Next Steps

It is hoped that key individuals from a number of Contracting Parties will be prepared to indicate their support for this idea and willingness to explore within their governments how to advance it within the COP. IUCN, principally through its World Commission on Protected Areas and the Commission on Environmental Law, and through the Protected Areas and Environmental Law Programmes of the IUCN Secretariat, will be ready to assist in the preparation of the work programme. The next World Parks Congress (Africa, 2002) would be a good target to set for the adoption of key measures arising out of the work programme.

References

- Glowka, Lyle, Françoise Burhenne-Guilman, Hugh Synge, Jeffrey A. McNeely, and Lothar Gündling. 1994. *A Guide to the Convention on Biological Diversity*. Environmental Law and Policy Paper No. 30. Gland and Cambridge, U.K.: IUCN.
- IUCN. 1994. *Guidelines for Protected Area Management Categories*. Gland and Cambridge, U.K.: IUCN.
- . 1997. Resolutions and Recommendations, World Conservation Congress, Montreal, Canada, 13-23 October 1996. Gland and Cambridge, U.K.: IUCN.

For further information, please contact: Adrian Phillips, Chair, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, 2 The Old Rectory, Dumbleton Nr Evesham WR11 6TG, United Kingdom. This article was submitted by Bruce Amos, WCPA Vice Chair for North America. For an introduction to the work of the WCPA, see David Sheppard's article elsewhere in this issue.

