

Asia Protected Areas Charter

(Draft)

The Asia Challenge

Asia is the world's most rapidly growing region as well as one of the most bio-diverse. This dynamic development has led to unprecedented prosperity, but also to unprecedented demands from nature and its bounty.

Asian peoples have historically lived in harmony with nature, developing cultures and traditions that benefit from it, while also respecting the power, beauty and delicate balance of the natural world.

However, the pace of growth and development is now such that this ancient balance is being destroyed, threatening our species and ecosystems – the very foundations on which our development depends.

Throughout history protected areas have proved to be one of the most successful approaches to conserve nature and associated cultural resources in Asia and worldwide. Now, as Asia re-emerges on the world stage, our protected areas – and the vital role they play in connecting people to nature, people to community and culture, and people to people – require our urgent attention if we are to build a brighter future for the region and guarantee human well-being for generations to come.

We, the delegates to the first Asia Parks Congress, recognize the crucial value of Asia's protected areas in both ecological and economic well-being and for building a harmonious and prosperous future for communities in Asia and worldwide.

We recognize that Asia's extensive and diverse protected area systems have a crucial role to play in reaching global biodiversity goals, including Aichi Target 11, which calls for at least 17 per cent of the world's terrestrial and inland water areas, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, to be equitably managed and conserved by 2020.

We are, therefore, acutely aware of the urgent need to enhance the management of Asia's protected areas, by increasing their share of human and financial resources and adopting international best practice approaches.

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Disasters and Protected Areas

We recognize that disasters in Asia are a significant and continual threat, as exemplified by the Sumatran-Andaman earthquake of 2004 and the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami in 2011, and that damage caused by disasters has become more serious as a result of population growth, urbanization, poorly planned development and concentration of land use.

We also recognize that protected areas contribute to best land use practices in areas at high risk of disasters, and promoting disaster prevention and mitigation through utilization of ecosystems services. Furthermore, healthy ecosystems sustain industries which are underpinned by local biodiversity, such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and tourism.

We recognize that nature restoration efforts and local community reconstruction in disaster-affected areas can promote people’s understanding of the natural environment and ecosystems, and that robust protected area systems can help increase safety for people and communities, and help reduce damage to property and infrastructure.

Harmonization of Regional Development and the Conservation of Natural Environments

We recognize that development in Asia is now accelerating, and that we must find a way to reconcile this development with the conservation of nature. This development has led to the deterioration of protected areas and the loss of biodiversity. The region holds rich and flora and fauna in its natural environments, and is one of the areas highest in biodiversity worldwide. It’s wide range of climate zones stretch across an exceedingly wide range of terrestrial and marine areas. In these areas many biodiversity hotspots are found, and the conservation of biodiversity and management and expansion of protected areas in these areas is critical.

We believe that protected areas are not only a means for the protection of the natural environment, but also a means for achieving harmony between humans and nature. They are also powerful engines for sustainable development and for securing human

1 well-being. As such, human interventions through promoting best practices and good
2 management in protected areas are instrumental to maintenance of biodiversity in
3 Asia's landscapes and seascapes.

4 5 **Collaborative Management of Protected Areas**

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7 We recognize that communities in Asia are traditionally connected to the land, and that
8 protected areas must take this into account. Protected areas must therefore also help
9 provide economic benefits and improved livelihoods to the region in which they are
10 located.

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12 We recognize that in order to prosper, protected areas in Asia must connect to the wider
13 land and seascapes within which they exist, and that government must help facilitate
14 this. Asia must extol traditional approaches that see protected areas not as isolated
15 islands in a sea of development, but blue and green threads that restore the fabric of
16 nature. Beyond the physical land and seascape, a diverse range of individuals,
17 communities and institutions must be engaged to ensure protected areas benefit all,
18 and these include business, indigenous peoples, NGOs and youth.

19 20 **Linkages between Protected Area Management and Cultures and Traditions**

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22 We recognize that protected areas are often deeply rooted in local cultures and
23 traditions and that these must be supported and encouraged for them to flourish and to
24 reconnect people to nature. We believe this construct is also applicable and
25 instrumental in many other parts of the world.

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27 Furthermore, we recognize that many cultures and religions originating in Asia have a
28 deep reverence for natural features and phenomena, and have created sacred natural
29 sites that are protected and managed by local communities. These special places not
30 only contribute to the spiritual richness and well-being of people and communities, but
31 also play a valuable role in conserving biodiversity and ecosystem services.

32 33 **Promotion of Locally-oriented Tourism**

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35 We recognize that protected areas serve as centers of recreation and education, and that
36 nature contributes to human health and well-being. Protected areas also contribute to

1 community welfare, by serving as ecotourism centers which benefit local peoples and
2 businesses. As the pace of life in Asia quickens and more and more people live in cities,
3 protected areas are becoming increasingly important as harbors of relaxation and
4 refuge which reconnect people to nature's rhythms. We encourage the use of protected
5 areas for these purposes, through responsible promotion of sustainable recreation and
6 tourism opportunities.

7 8 **Building a Protected Area Network and Partnership**

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10 We recognize that protected areas in Asia cannot address the challenges of Asia's
11 growth and development, and those of the modern world to which Asia connects,
12 without strengthening cooperation and collaboration. The formation of a pan-Asia
13 protected area network would increase the effectiveness of the region's protected areas,
14 and lead to increased dialogue and strengthened ties among countries. We also point
15 to the importance of increased coordination and cooperation with existing international
16 agreements and frameworks, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the World
17 Heritage Convention, Ramsar Convention and the Convention on Migratory Species.

18 19 **Our Commitments**

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21 The time to capture Asia's unprecedented growth and dynamism is now. As Asia
22 increasingly starts to lead on the world stage, it is imperative that our protected areas
23 also take the lead, and that we use our wealth of human and natural resources coupled
24 with our optimism and creativity to actively address challenges here and worldwide.

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26 We affirm our commitment to broaden understanding of the important role that
27 protected areas play in disaster risk reduction.

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29 We affirm our commitment to promote protected areas as natural solutions that can
30 help to address many of Asia's most pressing problems, including those associated with
31 the region's rapid development,

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33 We affirm our commitment to work with governments in Asia to strengthen the efforts
34 to mainstream protected area conservation and management in the developmental
35 agenda, and to increase the financial and technical support for protected areas while
36 enhancing protected area networks and cooperation through stronger engagement with

1 governments, business, indigenous peoples, NGOs and youth.

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3 We affirm our commitment to respect local cultures and traditions, and to listen to the
4 voices of those practicing them in the designation and management of protected areas.

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6 We affirm our commitment to promote protected areas as havens of rest, rejuvenation
7 and well-being that re-connect people to nature.

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9 We affirm our commitment to increase regional and international cooperation and
10 collaboration to enhance Asia's protected area management capacity, and help reach
11 international conservation goals through the formation of a pan-Asia protected area
12 network.

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14 Through these commitments, we will strengthen our collaborative spirit and heighten
15 our resolve to ensure Asia remains a leader in protected area policy and practice. We
16 will capture the energy and imagination of the current Asia boom to build a foundation
17 of connection, respect, and momentum for protected areas. We will work toward a future
18 where protected areas enhance human progress, resulting in people living in harmony
19 with nature.

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